SENT NAVA

HEADING: L60 V Q2P

LZ Q2P L60 0617Z

PLAY BALL

Alba Pratalia

RTOR 0642 XU 2400/8 NOV.

Priority	Routine	Nite	Ack	ZRO

I don't want any messages saying 'I'm holding my position.' We're not holding a goddamned thing. We're advancing constantly and we're not interested in holding anything except the enemy's balls. We're going to hold him by his balls and we're going to kick him in the ass; twist his balls and kick the living shit out of him all the time. Our plan of operation is to advance and keep on advancing. We're going to go through the enemy like shit through a tinhorn.

(A son-of-a-goddamned-bitch named George Patton)

ESTA ES LA HISTORIA DE UN FRACASO

The War is Over, Comrade

(Or Maybe Not, If You Ask Commander Petronj)

Setting: The Socialist Utopia (Finalized, Functional, and Fully Red)

The revolution was victorious. The old bourgeoisie has been stripped of its wealth and power, their

mansions turned into communal housing, their factories nationalized, their ridiculous top hats burned ceremonially in the town square. After years of struggle, the proletariat won, established a temporary ruling committee, and then transitioned into direct democratic elections. There are no billionaires, no capitalist overlords, and no wage slaves. The people own everything, collectively.

For the first time in history, there is no class struggle. No oppression. No wars.

But there is still Commander Sander Petronj.

Commander Sander Petronj was the spearhead of the revolution's military campaign. A battle-hardened, bloodthirsty warlord who won every engagement he fought, no matter how dire the odds. His personal philosophy boiled down to: "Overwhelming firepower solves all problems. Except hangovers. For those, you need whiskey."

He personally stormed palaces, rode tanks into enemy headquarters, and strangled counterrevolutionary officers with his bare hands when ammunition ran low. His admiration for

George S. Patton borders on religious devotion—he wears a double-holstered belt with two Colts, often quotes Old Blood and Guts, and has framed posters of Patton in his office (alongside one of Lenin, just in case anyone questions his ideological purity).

But the war is over now.

No more battles. No more enemies.

Just peaceful elections, fair wages, and well-organized communal infrastructure.

And the problem with war heroes like Petronj is that they don't handle peace very well.

The proletariat committee is terrified.

He once staged a "tactical ambush" on the mailman because he thought his newspaper was a coded enemy transmission.

When a neighbor trimmed his hedges too early in the morning, Petronj responded by declaring a personal siege on the man's property, camping in his backyard with a flask of vodka and a machine gun "for deterrence."

He refuses to take off his uniform, despite peace having been declared five years ago.

He insists that every traffic stop is a psychological warfare operation and refuses to show his license unless the officer can correctly recite Patton's Speech to the Third Army.

The proletariat is deeply grateful for his service. But they are also deeply worried that, without an enemy to fight, Petronj will create one.

The Solution: Keep the Lunatic Busy

The Committee convenes.

After much debate, vodka, and nervous glances at his file, they come to a decision:

Assign him two aides-de-camp. Their only mission?

Keep him away from trouble.

Keep him away from weapons.

Keep him away from alcohol before noon.

Keep him from launching a counter-counter-revolution against imaginary enemies.

Enter: The Unfortunate Aides

Comrade Viktor Zelenko – A bureaucrat, mild-mannered, paper-pushing functionary who dreams of an easy desk job and is now stuck babysitting a walking, talking war crime with a moustache.

Lieutenant Masha Kovalenko – The only military officer who has survived a full year under Petronj's command without developing a drinking problem. Tough, disciplined, and probably the only person on Earth capable of telling him 'No' without getting shot.

Together, they must ensure that the good Commander does not:

Invade the neighboring country "just for a laugh."

Accidentally start a black market for surplus artillery.

Personally train pigeons as aerial saboteurs.

Announce that the Socialist Utopia needs a space fleet and begin conscripting astronauts at gunpoint.

And most importantly:

Prevent him from appointing himself Supreme Commander of the Socialist Golf Club and waging war on capitalist mini-golf courses.

First Day on the Job

Time: 07:48 AM
Location: Commander Sander Petronj's Residence
(A fortified bungalow full of weapons, Patton memorabilia, and empty liquor bottles.)

The sun was barely up, but Commander Sander Petronj had been awake for hours—drinking, reminiscing, and reliving past glories in his own personal war museum of a living room.

In his right hand, a half-empty bottle of Cuban rum, the label torn, the contents sloshing with every exaggerated gesture.
In his left hand, a Colt .45, cocked, safety off.

Before him, pinned to the wall with a bayonet, was a framed picture of Che Guevara.

Petronj, shirtless, wearing only his military trousers and his old leather holster belt, swayed slightly as he

lectured the photograph, his voice a booming slur of admiration and one-upmanship.

"I read your Congo diaries, you magnificent bastard. You and your men—charging at tanks with grenades, full of revolutionary zeal.
Glorious.

But let me tell you something, Comrade Che.

We took a tank once with nothing but sticks, rocks, and a Peugeot car jack."

He took a deep swig of rum, wiped his mouth with his gun hand, then pointed the Colt at Guevara's face like he was making a crucial point.

"They said it couldn't be done. They said, 'Comrade Petronj, you need anti-tank weapons!'"

He scoffed.

"Bah! Who needs anti-tank weapons when you've got initiative?"

He holstered the Colt dramatically—only to immediately unholster it again, because keeping it in the holster was a rookie move.

BOOM BOOM BOOM BOOM

Four shots straight into the ceiling.

A chunk of plaster rained down onto the floor.

Somewhere in the house, a cat screamed in terror and bolted.

A maid—whose contract explicitly stated she would not be responsible for 'military-grade bullshit'—quit on the spot and fled.

It was at this exact moment that Comrade Viktor Zelenko and Lieutenant Masha Kovalenko arrived at Commander Petronj's front door, briefcases in hand, unprepared for the waking nightmare awaiting them inside.
First Impressions:

Viktor Zelenko: "Oh sweet merciful Marx, this is worse than I imagined."

Masha Kovalenko: "Of course he's drunk. Of course he's shirtless. Of course he's shooting at the walls. It's 7:48 in the morning."

Viktor turned to Masha, whispering:
"We could just leave."

Masha:
"And then who stops him from driving a tank through Parliament at lunchtime?"

Viktor:
"Good point."

They took a deep breath and knocked.

Inside, Petronj spun towards the sound, raising his Colt like he was still on the battlefield.

"STATE YOUR BUSINESS OR PREPARE TO BE DESTROYED."

Masha and Viktor exchanged one last "oh, we are so doomed" glance before stepping inside.

"Good morning, Commander. We're your new aides."

Silence.

Petronj blinked.

Then, suddenly—he grinned.

"Good! About damn time! I need reinforcements."

Viktor, cautiously:
"Reinforcements for… what, exactly?"

Petronj raised the rum bottle like a general raising his saber before a cavalry charge.

"For the next battle, of course."

Masha:
"What battle?"

Petronj paused dramatically.

Then, in a whisper filled with military gravitas and pure lunacy:

"…I haven't decided yet."

Viktor wanted to cry. Masha wanted to drink. Petronj wanted war.

And it was only 7:49 AM.

Viktor cleared his throat. "Commander, aren't you maybe tired? Feeling like lying down? In your bed?"

BOOM.

Petronj fired another shot straight into the ceiling, sending another shower of splinters onto the floor.

Then, he looked Viktor dead in the eye, unblinking.

"Just up there is my bedroom. I'm shooting at my bed from below. What do you think?"

Viktor blinked.

"Holy Trotsky."

Masha, without looking at Viktor, whispered under her breath.

"No no no, that will only agitate him more."

Then, shifting gears immediately, she brightened and addressed Petronj with the same tone one might use with an unpredictable, heavily armed toddler.

"Is that rum any good, Commander?"

Petronj's bloodshot eyes flicked toward her.

He hesitated for a moment, then took a long, satisfied gulp.

"Upper shelf quality, kid."

Masha, nodding approvingly: "May we sit at a table and try it?"

Petronj grinned.

"Dear girl, what's mine is yours. This is communism! Let's sit and share!"

As they moved to the table, Masha leaned in and whispered to Viktor.

"See? Treat him like a toddler. A heavily armed, combat-trained, paranoid, lunatic toddler."

Viktor gulped as he pulled out a chair.

"I'm going to need a drink."

Masha: "Oh, we're all going to need a drink."

And so, at 07:52 AM, on their first day of duty, the two unfortunate aides-de-camp sat down for a tactical negotiation over Cuban rum, fully aware that their only mission was to prevent this man from starting a war before lunch.

Time: 14:32 PM
Location: Commander Sander Petronj's Residence

Viktor and Masha collapsed onto the dusty old couch in the living room, physically and mentally drained.

From the bedroom above—or rather, what remained of it—Commander Sander Petronj's snoring rattled

the foundation of the house, deep, guttural, and intermittently punctuated by the sound of him rolling over onto spent shell casings.

Viktor exhaled deeply, rubbing his face.

"Finally, he is asleep."

Masha: "Don't jinx it."

Viktor: "It's like having an over-caffeinated toddler."

Masha, smirking without even looking at him: "Told you."

Viktor stretched, looking far too comfortable for a man who had just survived a morning of gunfire, rum, and existential terror.

"Well, I don't mind this family dynamic."

Masha: "I do."

Viktor, grinning: "Maybe mama and papa snuggle a bit?"

Masha, rolling her eyes: "Get out of here."

Viktor, reaching out playfully: "Come on."

Masha, deadpan: "I said get."

Viktor, leaning in, still half-joking: "Just a kiss?"

And then—out of nowhere, like a goddamn jungle predator—

Petronj appeared.

Completely silent.
No warning.
No creaky floorboard.
No hint of his presence except the vague shift in atmospheric pressure before absolute doom descended upon Viktor.

Before Viktor could process his own impending mortality, a steel vise clamped around his throat.

Headlock.

In less than a second, he was flipped onto the ground with brutal, military precision.

Wrist lock. Pinned. No escape.

Petronj, eyes bloodshot but clear, voice a low, terrifying growl:

"I killed 52 men who disrespected my female soldiers.
Wanna be number 53?"

Masha, arms crossed, watching Viktor struggle on the floor:

"He's not lying. I saw him."

Viktor, wheezing: "Holy Trotsky, I was joking!"

Petronj tightened the hold slightly, making Viktor emit a small, pathetic squeak.

"SO WERE THEY."

Viktor: "MESSAGE RECEIVED, COMMANDER."

Petronj held the lock for another three seconds, just enough to make Viktor reconsider every life choice that led him here, then released him like he was tossing away a used napkin.

Petronj: "Good. Now pour me a drink."

Masha, smirking as Viktor gasped for air on the floor:

"I'll get the rum."

Time: 22:14 PM
Location: Commander Sander Petronj's Residence

The coffee table was now a battlefield of empty glasses, stray bullet casings, and one particularly unfortunate cigar that had been used as a makeshift pointer during Petronj's drunken lecture.

The Commander, barely upright, had gone through seven daiquiris, hold the lime, hold the sugar—or, as any rational human being would call it, "rum on the rocks".

And now, in a scene that no Marxist theorist had ever foreseen, he was quibbling over the mathematical inconsistencies in the third volume of Das Kapital.

"MARX WAS A GENIUS, YES, BUT A MATHEMATICIAN? HAH! BAH! HE WOULDN'T HAVE BEEN ABLE TO COUNT AMMUNITION IN A GODDAMN SUPPLY LINE!"

Petronj slammed the open book onto the table, sloshing his drink as he jabbed at a specific passage.

"LOOK AT THIS! LOOK AT THIS!"

Viktor, who loved to pose as an intellectual, squinted at the page, trying desperately to follow the numbers.

Viktor: "Uh, well, I think what Marx is trying to say is that—"

Petronj: "NO! DON'T THINK, READ! WHAT DOES HE SAY ABOUT SURPLUS VALUE HERE? GO ON, COMRADE, ENLIGHTEN ME!"

Viktor's eyes darted across the page, his soul departing his body as the numbers blurred together into an indecipherable soup of capital flow, exchange ratios, and labor value.

He gulped. He had no idea what any of it meant.

Viktor: "I, uh, well, it's a complex economic model—
"

"BULLSHIT!" Petronj bellowed, slapping the book so hard it nearly took flight.

"MARX KNEW JACK SHIT ABOUT LOGISTICS! HE SHOULD HAVE FOUGHT A DAMN WAR BEFORE WRITING A WORD ABOUT LABOR DISTRIBUTION! LOOK AT THIS FORMULA! IT ASSUMES CONSTANT CAPITAL GROWS LINEARLY!"

Viktor, sweating: "I mean, theoretically—"

Petronj: "THEORETICALLY? THEORETICALLY?! THEORETICALLY I COULD FIRE MY COLT INTO THE CEILING

RIGHT NOW AND IT WOULDN'T COLLAPSE! WANNA TEST IT?!"

Viktor: "…No, Commander."

Meanwhile, Masha sat on the opposite end of the couch, her head in her hands.

She had heard this argument too many times during the campaign—once in a trench, once in the back of a moving tank, and at least five times in a heavily shelled-out farmhouse while Petronj "corrected" Lenin's economic policies between mortar blasts.

She was done.

She had two choices:

Jump out the window.
Use her own gun to end it.

She subtly checked the window height. Second floor. A broken leg at worst.

Tempting.

Viktor, seeing the hopelessness in her eyes, leaned over and whispered,

"Stay with me, Comrade. We will survive this together."

Masha: "Shut up, pseudo-intellectual."

Viktor: "Fair."

"THE VALUE OF LABOR POWER CAN NEVER BE FULLY QUANTIFIED IN A SYSTEM BASED ON THE EXPLOITATION OF SURPLUS LABOR! THAT'S WHAT HE GETS WRONG!"

BOOM.

A gunshot into the ceiling.

Masha didn't even flinch. Viktor yelped.

Petronj leaned forward, completely serious, completely wasted.

"THAT'S THE HOLE IN HIS THEORY. LITERALLY. THE HOLE. LOOK AT IT."

Viktor looked up at the new bullet hole.

Viktor: "I see it, Commander."

Petronj nodded, satisfied. "Good. Now get me another drink. We're getting to the Engels problem next."

Masha leaned back against the couch, staring at the ceiling.

She had two guns and zero options.

Time: 22:47 PM
Location: Commander Sander Petronj's Residence, Living Room → Garden

The atmosphere had been absurd, but contained—Petronj's ranting about Marx's flawed economic models, Masha's slow descent into existential despair, and Viktor's increasing realization that he was not nearly as smart as he thought he was.

Then, BOOM.

A single gunshot tore through the night—not a wild, drunken shot, not one of Petronj's usual architectural modifications to his ceiling.

This was aimed. Deliberate. Precise.

Petronj lowered his smoking Colt .45, his expression stone cold, entirely sober.

"The counter-revolutionaries are back."

For a moment, nobody moved.

Then—

Masha vaulted over the couch, drew her pistol, and hit the floor in one motion.

Viktor, still frozen: "What the Engels is happening right now?"

Masha didn't answer—she was already rolling across the floor, reaching the open window in seconds, disappearing into the garden's darkness.

From outside, her voice came low, steady, professional:

"He's down. Had a gun."

Viktor, staring at Petronj, who still held his own pistol: "I know he has a gun, he is standing right here!"

Petronj ignored him, stood up, and walked calmly to the door.

Viktor: "Apparently, we're strolling the garden now."

The Garden, Total Darkness

The moon barely lit the garden meadow, but even in the near-complete dark, Viktor could see the body.

A man, face up, motionless.

A single, clean bullet hole between his eyes.

Viktor approached carefully, glancing at Masha, who was already checking the body.

To her credit, the dead man had been holding a gun.

Viktor: "Alright, so this was real. Not an episode. Not drunken paranoia. We actually just executed someone in the garden."

Masha, matter-of-fact: "Correct."

Viktor, rubbing his temples: "Let me get this straight. This man—who is all piss and vinegar, drunk off his ass, deep in a convoluted critique of Marx's mathematical inconsistencies—

—senses an intruder in the dark, shoots him through the eyes without missing… and then just resumes the Engels discussion like nothing happened?"

Petronj, already lighting a cigar: "What's your point, Comrade?"

Viktor: "MY POINT IS THAT YOU JUST TOOK A PERFECT HEADSHOT WHILE HAVING A DAMN PHILOSOPHICAL DEBATE WITH ME."

Petronj took a long, thoughtful drag, exhaled.

Then, in his usual calm, collected, vaguely psychotic tone:

"Multitasking, Comrade.
War doesn't pause for economic theory."

Masha, dry: "Though it often causes economic theory."

Petronj: "Exactly!"

Viktor, rubbing his face: "We're all going to die."

Masha: "Probably."

Petronj, patting Viktor's back: "Not tonight, Comrade. Not tonight."

Time: 22:55 PM
Location: Commander Sander Petronj's Garden

Petronj stood over the fresh corpse, puffing his cigar, the embers glowing like a tiny battlefield fire in the darkness.

Masha crouched beside the body, examining the weapon still clenched in the dead man's hand. Standard police-issued pistol.

She pulled at the lanyard—it was snapped, not removed.

Masha, squinting at the serial number: "Not much of a counter-revolutionary here, Commander."

Petronj, exhaling smoke: "He had a gun."

Masha: "Yes, but look. It's a common police gun. Standard issue. Still has the lanyard, just snapped."

She turned it over, showing him the intact serial number.

"This gun wasn't smuggled in from some underground cell. It's been stolen from a street cop."

Viktor, muttering to himself: "Oh good, so we shot a petty thief. That's much better."

Petronj grunted, nudging the dead man's boot with his own. "Or a deserter. Or an informant. Or a coward."

Viktor: "Or a drunk idiot looking for an easy payday."

Petronj: "And he found the ultimate payday. Rest in peace, comrade."

Viktor: "You shot him through the face, Commander."

Petronj: "Rest in pieces, then."

Masha sighed, standing up and dusting off her hands.

"We need to figure out who this man was before we just throw him in the compost pile."

Petronj: "You two do that. I need another drink."

Masha: "Of course you do."

Viktor, looking at the body: "You're really just going to go back inside like nothing happened?"

Petronj paused for a moment, considering.

Then he pulled the spent casing from his revolver, tossed it onto the body, and shrugged.

"I regret nothing."

And with that, he strolled back toward the house, whistling a war tune.

For a moment, just a moment, something shifted in his eyes—a flicker of something old, something deeply ingrained in his very being.

He stepped back, squared his shoulders, and in one smooth, terrifying motion, snapped into his old battlefield stance.

His voice, now razor-sharp, clear as a bullet cutting through the air:

"And just like that, we're at war again. Peacetime's over. So, It's 'SIR, you're really just going to go back

inside like nothing happened SIR' to you now, soldier."

Silence.

Viktor blinked. His mouth opened. Closed. Opened again. Nothing came out.

He finally turned to Masha.

"I am a what now, Masha?"

Masha didn't look at him. She kept her eyes on Petronj, assessing the damage, calculating just how bad this was about to get.

"Actually," she said, adjusting her uniform, "in the military, I am a Major Sergeant."

Viktor, staring at her in pure horror: "Oh no."

Masha, smirking: "Oh yes."

Viktor, exhaling like a man who had already accepted the dark times ahead:

"Ma’am, yes, ma’am."

Petronj, nodding approvingly, already striding toward the house:

"Good. Now let’s plan our first offensive before sunrise."

Viktor, whispering to himself as he followed them inside:

"We were so close to getting through the day."

Time: 23:18 PM
Location: Commander Sander Petronj’s Residence, Living Room

Masha had stepped away for a moment to make a phone call, leaving Viktor alone with Petronj, which was never a good idea.

Petronj had already set up a war map on the coffee table, which was just an old newspaper with a whiskey stain in the shape of the country, but it was a start.

Viktor sat in silent horror, watching the gears of madness start to turn in Petronj's head.

Then—Masha returned, phone in hand, expression tense.

She spoke quickly, her voice sharp:

"Other places have been hit. Shots fired near some public building. Apparently, a bullet went through the window of some ministry. Doesn't seem very professional, but surely isn't isolated."

Silence.

Viktor slowly turned his head toward Petronj, who had gone unnervingly still.

Then, in a low, menacing growl, the Commander said:

"We'll show them what professional means."

Viktor closed his eyes.

Exhaled.

Then, rubbing his temples, muttered to himself:

"Why do I know he'd say that?"

Masha, whispering: "Because deep down, you already understand your fate."

Petronj, standing up, stretching his shoulders like a man preparing to conquer a continent:

"We move in one hour. Load up."

Viktor: "Load what? We don't even know who's attacking!"

Petronj: "I'll know them when I see them."

Viktor: "That is not how intelligence-gathering works!"

Masha: "Viktor. Just… breathe."

Viktor: "I CAN'T, Masha, BECAUSE HE'S ABOUT TO START A WAR BASED ON VIBES."

Petronj, nodding: "Exactly. Now, who wants a drink before the counteroffensive?"

Time: 23:42 PM
Location: Commander Sander Petronj's Residence, Living Room → Private Call

The living room had transformed into an armory.

Petronj sat at the table, meticulously cleaning, loading, and preparing a frankly alarming collection of weapons.

A disassembled Kalashnikov lay in neat, oiled pieces, its components glistening like a surgeon's tools.

Six revolvers, each one getting carefully loaded with fresh rounds, polished like they were precious artifacts.

A combat knife and two bayonets, their edges slowly dragged against a whetstone, the soft metallic hiss filling the room like a death rattle.

His movements were methodical, calm, disturbingly precise—the motions of a man who had done this a

thousand times before, who was preparing for something inevitable.

Viktor sat on the couch, staring numbly at the entire situation, already in the bargaining stage of grief.

Masha, meanwhile, had quietly slipped into another room, gripping her phone with white-knuckled fingers.

She lowered her voice, stepping further into a shadowed corner, speaking in hushed, sharp tones.

"No. Absolutely not. Our terms were very clear: through his retirement. This isn't retirement anymore."

She peeked out, watching as Petronj calmly reassembled a sniper rifle, humming a war tune under his breath.

"I am NOT military-babysitting an alcoholic lunatic warlord through a real fucking war."

Her voice dropped even lower, filled with something that wasn't fear, wasn't anger—but something colder. Something that had taken years to harden.

"I've been under his command already. I barely kept myself alive."

Silence.

The person on the other end said something—something she didn't like.

Her jaw clenched.

She closed her eyes, exhaled slowly.

Then, with dead finality:

"You find someone else."

She hung up.

For a moment, she just stood there, hand still gripping the phone, staring at nothing.

Outside, from the other room—

"Masha! Get in here and pick a sidearm!"

She opened her eyes.

And she knew.

There was no one else.

It was still her problem.

With the resigned stiffness of a soldier walking back to the front, she stepped back into the room.

Sat down.

Picked up a pistol.

Viktor, watching her, whispered:

"You tried to quit, didn’t you?"

Masha, loading the magazine, eyes blank:

"Shut up, Viktor."

Time: 23:55 PM
Location: Commander Sander Petronj's Residence

Petronj sat at the edge of the table, running a rag along the barrel of an Italian-issued Model 91 Carbine, for some godforsaken reason.

Viktor, who had long abandoned trying to understand why an aging warlord was drunk-cleaning a century-old rifle, simply watched in exhausted silence.

Masha, still coming down from the absolute failure of her escape attempt, stood at the doorway, arms crossed.

Petronj, still polishing, asked without looking up:

"What do they say?"

Masha, internally: That you should not drunk-clean firearms.

Masha, out loud: "They suggest we wait."

Petronj paused.

Slowly turned his head toward her.

"Masha?"

Masha, already tired of this conversation: "Yes, sir, you don't wait."

Petronj grinned, slapping the rifle back onto the table and standing up with renewed energy.

"To the armory!"

Viktor, blinking: "The what?"

Masha, already rubbing her temples: "He's Petronj. Of course he has a private arsenal."

Viktor, gesturing at the absolute war museum of a living room, where no fewer than ten loaded weapons were within arm's reach:

"THIS ISN'T IT?!"

Petronj, patting Viktor's shoulder like a proud father about to introduce his son to the family business:

"Oh, my dear, sweet summer revolutionary. No. This is just decor."

Viktor, whispering: "Holy Trotsky."

Masha, sighing: "Welcome to Hell."

And with that, Petronj grabbed a lantern, kicked open a hidden door behind a bookshelf, and descended into the abyss.

Time: 00:07 AM
Location: Commander Sander Petronj's Secret Armory

The hidden door swung open, revealing a descending staircase that led into the dark abyss beneath the house.

Viktor hesitated. "This feels like the part of the movie where people die."

Masha shoved him forward. "No backing out now, comrade."

The stairs creaked, the air smelled of gun oil, metal, and faint traces of cordite.

Then—the lights flickered on.

And Viktor forgot how to breathe.

A massive underground vault, walls lined floor to ceiling with an arsenal so extensive, so insane, that it defied all logic and reason.

His jaw dropped.

Masha, unfazed, simply crossed her arms. "Yep. Knew it."

Petronj, beaming with pride, spread his arms wide like a king unveiling his empire.

"Welcome, comrades… to the heart of the revolution!"

Viktor, stepping forward in awe, whispered the only words that made sense:

"That belongs in a museum."

The Arsenal of Madness:

Prototype Weapons from 2034, not yet released, likely acquired through means best left unspoken.

Cold War-Era Soviet Arms, still functional, stored with unsettling care.

A row of pristine AK-47s, ranging from early Russian models to bizarre North Korean variants.

Barry Lyndon-style front-loading pistols, probably last fired in 1776 but still polished like national treasures.

A goddamn Gatling gun, restored, mounted, fully operational.

Hand grenades stacked in crates, labeled in multiple languages, some of which haven't been spoken since the Iron Curtain fell.

A harpoon gun, for some reason.

Crossbows, perfectly aligned, next to modern sniper rifles.

A literal medieval longsword, resting between two M16s.

An entire shelf labeled "Experimental," which Viktor immediately decided to never, ever touch.

Viktor, still reeling: "Commander… this isn't an armory. This is the world's most illegal gun show."

Petronj, already selecting a belt-fed machine gun: "No such thing as 'illegal' in a revolution, comrade!"

Masha, rubbing her temples: "How the hell did you even get half of these?"

Petronj, grinning: "Connections."

Masha, flatly: "Connections?"

Petronj, lighting a cigar: "Good ones."

Viktor, shaking his head: "I—this—I can't—HOW DID YOU GET A PROTOTYPE FROM THE FUTURE?!"

Petronj: "Oh, that? Let's just say the arms industry never truly dies, it just gets creative."

Masha, sighing deeply: "I swear to Lenin, I'm going to have an aneurysm."

Viktor, finally reaching full resignation: "Alright, what's the plan?"

Petronj, racking the slide on an unreasonably large rifle:

"We teach these amateurs what professional means."

Masha: "This is going to be the worst night of my life."

Viktor: "Oh, we passed that checkpoint hours ago."

Time: 00:15 AM
**Location: Commander Sander Petronj's Secret Armory

Petronj stood amidst his arsenal, eyes gleaming with militant enthusiasm as he gestured at the collection.

"Choose your baby."

Viktor blinked. "Baby?"

Masha, already making a beeline toward the 'Experimental' shelf, didn't hesitate.

With disturbing confidence, she pulled out a sleek, futuristic rifle, something clearly labeled ‘2034 PROTOTYPE—TOP SECRET’, with a rail system that looked like it belonged in a sci-fi film.

Viktor, still staring at the array of deadly possibilities, mumbled to himself:

"I… I still don’t know how to carve a chicken."

Petronj, completely ignoring his existential crisis, casually reached for a rifle—a Winchester 1873, the kind straight out of a John Wayne film.

It was not modern.
It was not practical for modern warfare.
It absolutely made a statement.

Petronj spun it in his hands like an old cowboy, nodded in satisfaction, and loaded a handful of .44-40 rounds into the chamber.

"The rest," he said, pausing for effect, "Enrico and Palmiro will carry."

Viktor: "Who the hell are—"

From behind a massive rifle rack, two figures emerged.

Two ancient, wrinkled, shriveling Italian communists, each looking like they had personally shaken hands with Lenin, stepped forward.

Their backs were permanently hunched, their faces leathery from decades of political struggle, and their eyes—oh, their eyes—burned with the fiery remnants of a thousand failed uprisings.

Each of them gripped the handles of a wheelbarrow, both piled high with guns, ammunition, and possibly some artifacts from the Spanish Civil War.

Enrico, coughing like he'd spent the last forty years chain-smoking in a union hall, adjusted his tattered beret.

"The proletariat is ready, Comrade Petronj."

Palmiro, barely keeping his oversized pants from falling off his skeletal frame, nodded solemnly.

"Death to fascism. We carry the weapons of the people."

Viktor, staring in silent disbelief, whispered to Masha:

"We are going to war… with two elderly museum exhibits and a cowboy gun."

Masha, still holding her unholy, futuristic death rifle, simply sighed:

"Yes, Viktor. Welcome to Petronj's world."

Petronj, grinning, slinging the Winchester over his shoulder:

"Onward, comrades! The night is young!"

Viktor, under his breath: "The night is a goddamn nightmare."

Time: 00:22 AM
Location: Commander Sander Petronj's Secret Armory

Viktor watched in horrified fascination as Enrico and Palmiro, the two ancient, near-mummified Italian communists, maneuvered their wheelbarrows full of weapons with surprising dexterity.

Something about them felt off—not just their age, but their entire existence.

Viktor, whispering to Masha: "Are we sure they're alive? Because they look… preserved."

Masha: "Shut up, Viktor."

Petronj, grabbing a bandolier of rifle rounds, grinned.

"Ah, Enrico and Palmiro. Long-time comrades. Fought together in many battles."

Viktor, squinting: "In which century, sir?"

Before Petronj could answer, Enrico's withered, skeletal hand shot out and landed a solid, practiced scappellotto (a classic Italian head-smack) on the back of Viktor's head.

"E fatti i cazzi tuoi."

Mind your own fucking business.

Viktor staggered forward from the force, eyes wide. "What the—"

Then, from the other side, Palmiro struck with an equally vicious scappellotto, sending Viktor reeling into a full existential crisis.

"Reazionario!"

"Reactionary!"

Viktor blinked rapidly, rubbing his head. "Holy Trotsky, they hit like a freight train."

Petronj laughed, clapping Enrico on the back. "That's the strength of the true proletariat, Viktor!"

Masha, smirking: "You deserved that, honestly."

Viktor, still rubbing his head, looked up at the two shriveled revolutionaries, now back to quietly

loading grenades into their wheelbarrows as if nothing happened.

"No, really—who are they? Where did you even find them?"

Petronj, lighting a cigar, exhaled thoughtfully. "Some say they marched with Garibaldi. Others claim they were in Spain with the Brigades. A few insist they were the first men to storm the Winter Palace."

He grinned, puffing the cigar.

"Personally, I think they came with the concept of communism itself—just emerged fully formed, ready for the revolution."

Viktor, under his breath: "I believe it."

Palmiro, muttering as he tightened a strap on his wheelbarrow: "Ai miei tempi, i giovani non facevano domande inutili."

("In my day, young people didn't ask stupid questions.")

Enrico, nodding sagely: "Ora sono tutti filosofi."

("Now they're all philosophers.")

Viktor, lowering his voice to Masha: "This is like being insulted by the ghosts of Lenin's childhood friends."

Masha, grabbing extra magazines for her rifle: "Just don't ask them about Mussolini. I made that mistake once."

Viktor: "And?"

Masha, darkly: "You ever see an old man flip a dining table and pull out a concealed shotgun from under his coat?"

Viktor: "…Holy shit."

Petronj, patting his Winchester, stepping toward the exit: "Alright, comrades! The revolution calls once again! To battle!"

Viktor, sighing: "And here we go."

Masha, grinning as she locked and loaded her rifle: "Try to keep up, reazionario."

And with that, the most unhinged militia in modern history rolled out.

Time: 00:34 AM
Location: Outside Petronj's Residence → The Battlefield

The night air was thick with tension, the weight of old battles settling over them like a familiar, unwelcome guest.

Then—the sky roared.

Jet fighters screamed overhead, flying dangerously low, rattling windows, kicking up dust and debris.

A missile streaked down, carving through the darkness like a vengeful god.

BOOM.

The explosion erupted, not far from them—shockwaves rolling over the land, shattering glass, shaking the ground.

Petronj froze, his eyes wide, body rigid.

For a moment, he wasn't in the present.

He was back in Santiago, Chile.
11 September 1973.
La Moneda Palace burning.
Jets tearing the sky apart.
Explosions drowning out the screams.

His hand tightened around his Winchester.

And then—rage.

Pure, undiluted, burning rage.

Petronj: "Oh no. I'm not letting that happen again!"

CH-CHK.

He cocked the Winchester with a dramatic, completely unnecessary motion, like he was about to

single-handedly shoot down a jet with a lever-action rifle.

Viktor, staring at him in disbelief: "1973?"

Masha, deadpan, already checking her ammo: "He's old."

Viktor, pointing wildly at Enrico and Palmiro, who hadn't even flinched at the explosion: "SO WHAT ARE THEY?!"

Before Masha could answer, Enrico spat onto the ground, cracked his ancient knuckles, and pulled out an honest-to-God Molotov cocktail from inside his coat.

Enrico, muttering: "Another golpe? Non questa volta."

("Another coup? Not this time.")

Palmiro, pulling out a bolt-action rifle so old it might have seen World War I:

"Comandante, I still have one good shot in me."

Petronj, grinning like a madman, eyes burning:

"That's all we need, Palmiro. That's all we need."

Viktor, watching an ancient Italian communist light a Molotov while a shirtless warlord leveled a cowboy rifle at the sky:

"Holy Trotsky, we're going to die."

Masha, calmly taking aim: "Not if we shoot first."

Then the night lit up with gunfire.

Time: 00:36 AM
Location: Outside Petronj's Residence → The Battlefield

The first explosion still echoed, dust and debris settling when—

Another jet.

Approaching. Fast.

Viktor barely had time to react before Petronj stepped forward, eyes locked on the approaching aircraft, his grip tightening on the Winchester 1873.

Viktor, horrified: "He's actually going to try it."

Masha, squinting at the impossible sight unfolding before them: "Oh no."

Petronj raised the rifle, feet planted firm, stance unwavering.

He breathed in.

The jet roared closer—a beast of steel and fire, its engines howling against the night sky.

And then—

CRACK.

The first shot rang out.

CRACK. CRACK. CRACK.

Petronj emptied the Winchester, every round fired directly at the nose of the jet, each shot more impossibly accurate than the last.

Viktor, yelling over the gunfire: "THIS ISN'T HOW PHYSICS WORKS!"

Masha, watching the horror unfold, muttering: "Tell that to Petronj."

And then—

Something happened.

A sputter. A stutter in the jet's movements.

A slight, unnatural imbalance in the wings.

For a split second, it looked like nothing would happen—like reality itself refused to acknowledge what had just occurred.

Then—

The jet tilted.

It wobbled.

It lurched violently to the side.

And then—

BOOM.

The jet slammed into the next hill, a massive fireball illuminating the darkness, sending shockwaves rolling through the valley.

Silence.

Smoke rose from the wreckage, black against the night sky.

Petronj exhaled slowly, spun the Winchester in his hand like a cowboy, and casually slung it over his shoulder.

"Told you we'd show them what professional means."

Viktor's eye twitched.

Masha, slowly turning to look at him, still stunned: "Say it."

Viktor, voice barely more than a whisper:

"…He single-handedly shot down a jet. With a lever-action rifle."

Palmiro, nodding approvingly, lighting another Molotov: "Good shot, Comandante."

Enrico, grinning with all five of his remaining teeth: "The proletariat never misses."

Viktor, finally, completely breaking:

"WHAT THE ACTUAL FUCK JUST HAPPENED?!"

Petronj, completely calm, walking toward the smoking wreckage:

"Reload, comrades. There might be more."

Masha, finally holstering her weapon, shaking her head: "Viktor, welcome to the war."

Time: 00:40 AM
Location: The Battlefield, Outside Petronj's Residence

The wreckage of the jet still burned in the distance. Smoke billowed into the night sky, casting long, dancing shadows over the ragtag group of revolutionaries standing in the meadow.

Viktor, still in shock, hands on his head: "I still don't understand how physics allowed that to happen."

Masha, suddenly realizing the larger implication, went dead still.

Her breath hitched.

Then, in a whisper, filled with impending doom:

"Brace yourself."

Viktor, already exhausted: "What now?"

Masha, turning to him, face unreadable:

"Do you know who he is?"

Viktor, exasperated: "The lunatic we had to babysit?"

Masha, voice dropping to something far more serious:

"Do you know why we call him Commander?"

Viktor, blinking, confused: "Because he refuses to answer to anything else?"

Masha, shaking her head:

"No. Because during the revolution… he commanded all forces into victory."

Viktor, now paying attention: "What?"

Masha: "The army. The navy. The air force. All of them. He was in charge of everything."

Viktor: "Wait, wait, wait—"

Masha: "And now—"she gestured to the flaming wreckage"—we are at war again."

Viktor, realizing where this was going, panic setting in: "No. No, no, no—"

Masha, nodding grimly:

"And now, once again… he officially is the supreme commander of the nation."

Viktor: "NO."

Masha: "Yes."

Viktor: "WE WERE SUPPOSED TO STOP HIM FROM DOING THIS."

Masha: "Well, we failed."

Viktor, whispering in sheer horror: "So now we are officially—"

Petronj, turning back to them, slinging the Winchester over his shoulder, grinning like a man born for this moment:

"Back in command, comrades!"

Enrico & Palmiro, saluting proudly: "Viva il Comandante!"

Viktor, watching his entire life collapse into madness in real time:

"We are so fucked."

Time: 00:45 AM
Location: The Battlefield, Outside Petronj's Residence

The fire from the downed jet still roared in the distance, casting flickering light across the surreal scene. Petronj stood like a victorious warlord, smoke curling from his cigar, Winchester still casually slung over his shoulder.

Viktor sat on a rock, hands in his hair, silently grieving the death of logic.

Then—Masha's phone rang.

She answered instantly, standing at attention.

"Yes, sir, we're all right."

A pause.

"Very near, sir. Just above our heads."

A longer pause.

Her expression darkened slightly.

"No, sir, we had no air force support."

Another silence.

Her grip on the phone tightened.

"No, sir, no anti-aircraft either."

Then, after a beat—a deep inhale.

Her throat tightened.

She cleared it.

And then, with the reluctance of someone who knew how absurd this was about to sound:

"...Just him, sir."

Masha waited.

Then, barely above a whisper, voice trembling slightly:

"With a··· with a lever-action 1873 Winchester, sir."

Viktor, watching this unfold, shuffled closer.

He leaned in, whispering in Masha's ear.

Masha blinked, hesitated—then sighed.

She straightened up.

"Sir, Comrade Zelenko would like you to tell physics to update her textbooks."

A long silence.

Masha's expression shifted from strained professionalism to outright concern.

"Yes, sir. The two Italians are with him."

A pause.

Masha, horrified: "What do you mean THEN ANYTHING'S FINE?! Sir? Sir?!"

She pulled the phone back, staring at it.

The line was dead.

Viktor, voice flat: "Did… did the government just decide that if Enrico and Palmiro are with him, all laws of nature can be disregarded?"

Masha, slowly lowering the phone, staring at nothing: "Apparently."

Viktor, head in his hands:

"We are so past the point of no return."

Petronj, cracking his knuckles, looking at the wreckage with satisfaction:

"Alright, comrades. Let's go find out who we're fighting."

Viktor, muttering:

"Reality is so unprepared for this man."

Time: 01:12 AM
Location: Inside an Armored Military Truck

The truck rumbled through the night, an unforgiving metal beast rolling over dirt roads at speeds that felt concerningly reckless given the questionable age of its driver.

Palmiro, hunched over the massive wheel, drove with the unshakable confidence of a man who had spent a lifetime smuggling weapons across borders in vehicles that should never have been road-legal.

Masha sat in the passenger seat, staring at her phone screen, her face grim.

"Sir, I got the report."

Petronj, sitting casually on a crate of ammunition, reloading his Winchester as if this were all routine.

Masha, voice tight: "The jet we… you shot down was one of our air force. But the pilot was not one of ours. Still unidentified."

That got everyone's attention.

Viktor, sitting in the back, still coming to terms with life, exhaled sharply. "You're telling me someone stole a fighter jet?"

Masha: "Two planes are missing. The one who fired the missile must be the other one."

Petronj, raising an eyebrow as he loaded another bullet into the Winchester:

"Huh. Stolen police handgun… stolen fighter jet. That escalated quickly."

Enrico, shaking his head like a disappointed grandfather, muttered:

"Non fanno più gli antifurti di una volta."

(They don't make security systems like they used to.)

Viktor, looking increasingly nervous, suddenly realized a more immediate concern.

"Guys… who let the other Italian mummy drive a four-ton armored military truck?"

Palmiro, gripping the wheel with the casual ease of a man who had seen death, shaken its hand, and decided he wasn't impressed, didn't even look at him as he responded.

"Can you perform heel-and-toe gear shifting downhill on an icy road under enemy fire, little reazionario?"

Viktor: "What?!"

Palmiro, without waiting for an answer, promptly demonstrated.

The truck lurched violently, the tires spinning, then gripping, then spinning again, as Palmiro executed a textbook-perfect controlled drift, sending the four-ton beast skidding sideways around a tight corner before snapping it back into a straight line.

The entire vehicle leaned dangerously.

Crates rattled.

Viktor, white-knuckling the nearest surface: "STOP DEMONSTRATING!"

Palmiro, grinning with the barely concealed amusement of an old man terrorizing his grandchildren for fun:

"Eh, si impara facendo."

(You learn by doing.)

Masha, unbothered, continued scrolling through her phone. "Try not to kill us before we even get to the enemy, Palmiro."

Petronj, still calm, still reloading his rifle like they weren't actively cheating death:

"I like his style."

Viktor, screaming internally: "OF COURSE YOU DO!"

Time: 01:15 AM
Location: Inside an Armored Military Truck, Moving at Unreasonable Speeds

The truck skidded sideways again, barely avoiding a half-collapsed bridge, before correcting at the last second—a move that would have looked incredible in a rally race but was absolutely horrifying when performed in an armored military vehicle full of ammunition.

Viktor, clutching his seatbelt (which, he realized too late, did not exist): "I WANT TO GET OFF MR. BONAPARTE'S WILD RIDE!"

Palmiro, grinning like a man who had long ago stopped fearing death, gave the wheel a little flourish, as if making the truck dance.

Enrico, watching approvingly, casually lit a half-smoked cigarette and muttered:

"Tazio taught him to do that."

Viktor, still recovering from the near-death experience, blinked. "Tazio?"

Enrico, shrugging like he was mentioning an old drinking buddy:

"Nuvolari."
Silence.

The truck bumped over a pothole.

Viktor's brain short-circuited.

Viktor, whispering: "Nuvolari. As in... Tazio Nuvolari?"

Palmiro, still driving like a lunatic possessed by the spirit of 1930s motorsport, nodded with complete seriousness.

"Eh, he gave me some pointers."

Viktor, staring into the abyss: "Tazio Nuvolari has been dead since 1953."

Enrico, taking a long drag from his cigarette, completely unbothered:

"And?"

Viktor, mouth opening and closing, no sound coming out.

Petronj, nodding in approval: "Explains the technique."

Masha, scrolling through classified reports on her phone: "You're better off not asking follow-up questions, Viktor."

Viktor, head in his hands: "I AM IN A FOUR-TON TRUCK BEING DRIVEN BY A MUMMY TRAINED BY A GHOST."

Palmiro, laughing to himself, downshifting for no reason at all:

"Veloce come il vento, forte come il tuono."

(Fast as the wind, strong as the thunder.)

Viktor, sobbing internally: "I hate everything."

Time: 01:47 AM
Location: Still Inside the Armored Truck, Hurtling Through the Night

The truck thundered along the road, engine roaring, suspension groaning under the weight of its absurd passengers and their even more absurd arsenal.

The air inside was thick with gun oil, cigarette smoke, and the undeniable scent of impending chaos.

Petronj, leaning back like a king holding court, Winchester balanced across his lap, grinned as he launched into yet another story.

"So, there was this soldier on a telegraph pole in the midst of furious fire while we were moving toward Tunis."

Viktor, already mentally checked out: "Of course there was."

Petronj, ignoring him:

"I stopped and asked him what the hell he was doing up there."

"He answered, 'Fixing the wire, sir.'"

"I said, 'Isn't it a little unhealthy up there right now?'"

"And he goes, 'Yes sir, but this goddamn wire has got to be fixed.'

"I asked, 'Don't those planes strafing the road bother you?'"

"And he answered, 'No sir, but you sure as hell do.' "

Chaos Ensues

Enrico and Palmiro—two ancient communists who had personally seen entire regimes rise and fall—were now bent over, wheezing with laughter.

Enrico, slapping his knee, barely breathing: "Fantastico! Ahah!"

Palmiro, literally holding his belly, shaking: "Bellissima! Just like in the old days!"

Masha, sighing, rubbing her temples: "He went full Patton again."

Viktor, still processing the fact that their driver was now clutching his stomach in laughter, suddenly realized something horrifying.

Palmiro wasn't touching the wheel.

Palmiro. Was. Not. Touching. The. Wheel.

Viktor, eyes going wide, lunged forward:

"HANDS ON THE WHEEL!"

Palmiro, mid-laugh, casually grabbing the wheel at the last possible second, narrowly avoiding a complete, fiery death spiral into a ravine:

"Calmati, ragazzo! I was just… stretching!"

Viktor, clutching his chest, on the verge of a stroke: "YOU WERE ABOUT TO KILL US ALL, YOU OLD MANIAC!"

Petronj, grinning, completely unfazed: "Relax, Comrade Zelenko. If he learned from Nuvolari, he knows what he's doing."

Viktor, pointing wildly at Palmiro: "HE LEARNED FROM A DEAD MAN!"

Enrico, leaning back, exhaling cigarette smoke: "And yet, we still live."

Viktor, muttering, sinking back into his seat: "I need a drink. I need a drink. I need a drink."

Masha, leaning over to him: "Trust me, you don't want to drink what Petronj has in his flask."

Petronj, grinning: "Smart girl."

And with that, the mad convoy continued—laughter, chaos, and impending warfare hurtling through the night, as one poor soul (Viktor) began to fully understand just how far beyond reason this mission had already gone.

Time: 02:15 AM
Location: Central Inter-Forces HQ, Situation Room

By some miracle of bureaucratic intervention, someone had managed to put a proper shirt on Commander Sander Petronj.

It wasn't buttoned all the way, and there was still a faint smell of gunpowder and rum, but it was enough to make him look at least vaguely like a man who belonged in the military high command, rather than a warlord who had just personally shot down a jet with a cowboy rifle.

As they entered the vast, steel-and-glass fortress of Inter-Forces HQ, the entire line of high-ranking officers—army generals, navy admirals, air force marshals— snapped to attention and saluted.

Masha, stone-faced, nodding curtly as she walked in.

Petronj, not even breaking stride, casually saluted back without really looking at anyone, as if this was all completely normal.

Viktor, meanwhile, was visibly trembling.

The Situation Room

They entered a massive, high-tech command center, the heart of military coordination for the entire nation.

Large digital screens displayed maps, satellite images, live battlefield intelligence feeds.

A long conference table stretched across the room, each seat occupied by high-ranking officers from every branch of the military—some visibly concerned, some stoic, a few clearly terrified.

At the head of the table, there was a single, imposing seat, marked by a polished nameplate that read:

SUPREME COMMANDER OF LAND, AIR, AND SEA

Viktor stopped cold.

His breath hitched.

His hands clenched into fists.

His entire body visibly shook as he watched, in utter horror, as Petronj strode forward—completely relaxed, completely in control—and lowered himself into the chair like it was his throne.

The room was silent.

All eyes on the legend, the madman, the uncontested leader of war.

Petronj, leaning back comfortably, lighting a cigar, exhaling slowly, then finally speaking:

"Alright, comrades. Tell me who we're shooting next."

Viktor, whispering, barely able to breathe:

"He’s actually sitting in the chair. He’s actually the Supreme Commander. This is really happening."

Masha, expression unreadable, arms crossed:

"Yes, Viktor. This is really happening."

Viktor, whispering, his soul leaving his body:

"We are so fucked."

Time: 02:32 AM
Location: Central Inter-Forces HQ, Situation Room

The massive screen at the front of the room glowed with satellite imagery, mapping out the battle in real-time.

A Briefing Officer, stiff-backed and precise, gestured to the screen.

"We have experienced some random fighting here around the capital, but the main movement has been here, on the northern coast."

Everyone leaned in.

The map shifted, highlighting a stretch of critical infrastructure—communications hubs, relay stations, transport control centers.

"We received confused communication, but all reported airstrikes, artillery fire, infantry. Then, we lost communication—comms were muzzled. But we can still follow on satellite. They are taking all critical places: communication systems, repeating antennas, transport control stations."

A pause.

The officer zoomed in on one location—a bridge riddled with mortar craters.

"They know what they are doing… but not so much how to do it. Look at the spread of mortar fire before hitting this bridge."

"Amateurs."

Petronj exhaled smoke from his cigar, eyes sharp.

"Amateurs who've been told what to do but left on their own to figure out how to do it."

The Briefing Officer nodded.

"Exactly."

The President and his full Cabinet stared at the screen from the Government Palace, patched in via a secure video call.

The atmosphere shifted.

Every single person in that room—Petronj, the President, the Ministers, the top brass—all of them snapped back into a mindset they hadn't needed since the revolution.

The air grew thick with the old tension, the instincts of conspirators, rebels, and battle-hardened survivors awakening once again.

Petronj turned his head, locked eyes with the President.

"Koba, I just need the fuel funds."

The President, arms folded, narrowed his eyes.

"The fuel, Sander? For what?"

Petronj, leaning forward just slightly, growling:

"For my goddamn army."

The President, knowing him too well, sighed.

Then, with the acceptance of a man who had already lost control the moment Petronj sat in that chair:

"Buy all the gas you want, Sander."

Petronj reached forward, grabbing the situation telephone in front of him.

No dialing.

No codes.

He simply raised it to his mouth and said:

"Play ball."

The Screens Ignite

A heartbeat of silence.

Then—

Red dots began moving.

On the large screens, all across the country, markers began to shift—columns of tanks, armored vehicles, battalions of infantry—all suddenly in motion.

In pre-prepared locations, thousands of hidden militia fighters, war veterans, and reserve forces began to mobilize.

Supply convoys rolled out from storage sites—long-forgotten weapons caches were activated.

Masha, watching this unfold, somewhere between disbelief and admiration:

"Holy Lenin, he just Out-Pattoned them."

Time: 02:37 AM

Location: Central Inter-Forces HQ, Situation Room

The screens were alive, red markers shifting, entire battalions mobilizing.

The nation's entire military, long thought to be in peacetime slumber, was suddenly in motion, as if a hidden switch had been flipped.

Petronj leaned back in his chair, calmly puffing his cigar, watching his war machine awaken.

Viktor, still in shock, still trying to process reality, turned to Masha.

"Out-what?"

Masha, still staring at the screens, arms crossed:

"George Patton. Military genius. Mad as a rabid dog… reminds you of anyone?"

Viktor, slowly turning to look at Petronj.

Masha continued, voice sharp, certain, like a history professor dropping the final piece of the puzzle.

"Second World War. Western Europe. The Allies are divided into three armies, advancing towards Germany. Patton is commanding the Third Army—the southernmost. And of course, he's advancing faster than all the others."

Viktor, nodding slowly, listening.

Masha:

"Then—disaster. The First Army gets stopped by the Ardennes german counter-offensive. Pinned down in the forests around Bastogne. Surrounded. Outnumbered. No air support because of bad weather. Eisenhower, Montgomery, and the high command gather for an emergency meeting, trying to figure out who and how can relieve Bastogne."

She pauses, glancing at Viktor.

"Patton doesn't hesitate. He says: 'I'll do it as soon as this meeting is over.'"

Viktor: "...Just like that?"

Masha, nodding:

"Because Patton already had a plan. A prepared, ready-to-execute plan. Before the Ardennes even happened. Because Patton was a maniac—but also the finest strategist and planner. He personally prepared contingency plans for everything. His staff was always on their toes, ready to move at a moment's notice."

She gestured at the massive screens, where the nation's forces were now moving with terrifying precision.

"So Patton left the conference room. Phoned his command. And just said: 'Play ball.'"

Viktor, breath catching.

Masha:

"That's all it took. A continent-sized, pre-arranged operation. Half of Patton's Third Army veered north. In three days, Bastogne was free."

A silence fell over them.

The weight of it settled in.

Masha, turning back to Viktor, voice low, certain, final:

"That's what just happened. That's what he just did."

Viktor swallowed hard, eyes darting from Masha to the screens to Petronj—

Who sat there, smirking, like a man who had seen all this unfold before it even began.

Like a man who had been waiting for this exact moment.

Like a man who already knew he had won.

Viktor's eyes watered.

He wiped them quickly, blinking, overcome.

Then, in a whisper, full of awe, disbelief, and absolute admiration:

"You magnificent bastard."

Time: 02:42 AM
Location: Central Inter-Forces HQ, Situation Room

The room was alive with movement. Officers scrambled, phones rang, satellite feeds updated in real time, tracking the unfolding military operation that had been planned long before the enemy even thought to attack.

And at the center of it all—Petronj.

Still seated, still calm, still smoking his slow-burning cigar, watching it unfold exactly as he intended.

Then, without looking up, without hesitation, he gave the next order.

"Have a helicopter ready. I want to fly to my army."

A murmur rippled through the room. Officers exchanged uneasy glances.

Then—Petronj pointed behind his back, without turning.

"With my staff."

His finger landed squarely on Masha and Viktor.

A pause.

Masha, arms crossed, looking unimpressed but internally already accepting her fate:

"Staff?"

Before she could protest, Viktor stepped forward, eyes still locked on Petronj like he was staring at the second coming of Lenin himself.

His voice was filled with unshaken devotion:

"I'll follow you to hell and back, you magnificent bastard."

Masha, sighing deeply, rubbing her forehead:

"Oh, for fuck's sake."

Petronj grinned.

"Then let's go meet my army."

And with that, the supreme commander of land, air, and sea rose from his chair, leading his newly anointed 'staff' toward destiny.

Time: 02:48 AM
Location: Central Inter-Forces HQ → Helipad

As Petronj strode toward the exit, Viktor and Masha flanking him, the rest of the military high command had a collective crisis.

Generals whispered urgently.
Admirals exchanged horrified glances.
Commanders cleared their throats.
A couple of janitors, who had somehow ended up in the war room, sensed that their mopping shift had just taken a turn for the historical.

Finally, one brave soul—a high-ranking Air Force general with six medals and a stress-induced ulcer—stepped forward, clearing his throat.

"Sir…"

Another general, cautiously: "Now, Sir…"

An admiral, tentatively: "Commander…"

A ground forces officer, nervously adjusting his collar: "Supreme Leader…"

A janitor, because at this point, why not: "Your Excellency…"

The Air Force general tried again, voice filled with painful diplomacy:

"Prudence would actually suggest that, during an inter-force operation, the supreme commander of said forces would be…"

He paused, choosing his next words very carefully:

"…somewhere safe?"
The Ultimate Answer

Petronj stopped walking.

Slowly, he turned to face them.

The room held its breath.

Then, with the undeniable certainty of a war god descending upon the battlefield, he declared:

"At the head of his troops! First line. Fighting with them!"

And to emphasize this perfectly unhinged philosophy, he unholstered both Colt .45s and fired two rounds into the ceiling.

BOOM. BOOM.

Plaster rained down.

A loose ceiling tile fell onto an admiral's head.

The janitors instinctively dove behind a desk.

"TO THE CHOPPER!" Petronj bellowed, spinning on his heel and marching toward the helipad like a Roman general leading a charge.

The Collective Reaction

All the other generals, admirals, commanders, officers, soldiers, and the couple of janitors:

A synchronized, full-body, painful facepalm.

Viktor, watching this madness unfold, eyes glistening, heart pounding, feeling the sheer weight of history upon him:

"He is Julius Caesar reborn."

Masha, grabbing him by the arm and dragging him toward the helicopter:

"And you're about to be his fucking scribe. Move it."

Time: 02:58 AM
Location: En Route to the Frontline, Aboard Military Helicopter

The rotors roared, the lights of the capital faded behind them, and ahead—war.

Inside the helicopter, Viktor, Masha, and Petronj sat strapped in, while their pilot focused on not crashing.

Petronj leaned back, arms crossed, cigar clenched between his teeth, looking unbothered, as if he were just heading to a particularly interesting pub fight.

Viktor, finally snapping out of his existential crisis, pressed the intercom button.

"So our armed forces are now converging onto the northern coast… with the preamble of a phone call?"

Masha, checking her rifle, deadpan:

"He's crazy, not that crazy."

She glanced toward the open laptop mounted on the helicopter's tactical console, analyzing the screens with military precision.

"If I saw the screens correctly, it's about 2 to 3% of our forces."

Viktor blinked.

"Wait. Only 2 to 3%?"

Masha: "Yep."

Viktor: "That's enough to block a military attack?"

Masha snorted, adjusting her headset.

"That's enough to invade a medium-sized neighboring country."

Viktor froze, trying to process this information.

Then, after a beat:

"We have that big an army?"

Masha, not even looking up from her screen, voice flat:

"How did you think we won… How did you think HE won a revolutionary war?"

Viktor turned to Petronj, who was currently looking out the window, humming a war tune, fingers

twitching as if ready to draw both Colts at any moment.

Viktor's eyes filled with something new—something terrifyingly close to love.

"You magnificent bastard."

Masha, rolling her eyes but smiling slightly:

"No capitalist motherfucker is getting a foot on this motherland."

The helicopter sped through the night, straight into war.

Time: 03:05 AM
Location: Aboard Military Helicopter, En Route to the Frontline

The helicopter cut through the dark sky, slicing through the night air like a blade.

Then—suddenly—

BANG. BANG. SPARKLE. BOOM.

The Italians React

Palmiro—at the controls, gripping the stick like a man who had flown everything from smuggler planes to stolen Soviet prototypes— barked over the intercom.

"Incoming! Evasive maneuvers!"

The helicopter lurched violently to the side, dipping low, skimming the treetops like a predator avoiding a net.

Enrico—at the door gun, ancient but as deadly as ever, immediately pulled the trigger.

"Engaging suppressive fire!"

The gun roared, spewing liquid fire, tracing arcs of destruction across the ground below.

The helicopter danced in the air, a chaotic, unpredictable whirlwind of old-school piloting and pure revolutionary instinct.

Viktor held on for dear life, barely staying in his seat.

Masha, gritting her teeth, clutching her rifle: "WHAT THE FUCK IS HAPPENING?!"

Then—

Petronj, calmly, without an ounce of concern, leaned toward the intercom.

"Vecchi miei, don't mean to disappoint you, but those were fireworks. Our troops'. We are winning already."
Silence.

Palmiro: "...Ah."

Enrico: "...Bene, bene." (Alright, alright.)

The helicopter steadied.

Enrico, casually letting go of the door gun as if nothing had happened: "I was still suppressing."

Palmiro, clearing his throat, adjusting his grip on the controls: "Evasive maneuvers were very effective."
Masha Loses It

Masha, blinking in sheer disbelief:

"How did you guys… how are you manning a combat helicopter?!"

Enrico, shrugging: "Che domande. We flew for the Spanish Republic."

Palmiro, grinning: "Eh, a chopper's just an airplane that flaps its wings."

Viktor, clutching his chest, overwhelmed by admiration, on the verge of tears:

"BELLISSIMI NONNI!"

Petronj, lighting another cigar, unfazed by all of this:

"Welcome to the revolution, comrades."

The helicopter raced forward, diving straight into victory.

Time: 03:45 AM
Location: Northern Frontlines

The helicopter landed softly, the rotors whipping up dust, but the war—if it could even be called that—was already over.

The 2-3% of the armed forces that Petronj had deployed had proven to be a gun to kill a mosquito.

The so-called "enemy" forces had either surrendered immediately or been wiped out by squads of rookies.

The battalions that had formed a "resistance" lasted less than half a night against a single mechanized company.

Entire armored vehicles were abandoned, some with the keys still in the ignition.

The firefights that did happen were so one-sided that veterans started telling rookies, "Take it slow, let them at least feel like they fought a little before they give up."

The "enemies" couldn't even properly be defined as such.

Their equipment? Stolen from government storage.

Their weapons? Pilfered from local armories.

Their vehicles? Some redirected from state logistics, others literally carjacked.

It wasn't a counter-revolutionary uprising—it was a poorly executed heist that got out of hand.

And worst of all?

Half of the "enemy" were locals.

Men who, after years of equal access to resources, opportunities, and collective ownership, had decided:

"There's too much equality here."

They wanted to be "more equal than others."

You're in the wrong fucking socialist utopia, motherfuckers.

As Petronj stepped off the helicopter, his boots hitting the dirt, the remaining "enemy" forces saw him and immediately dropped their weapons.

Some literally fell to their knees, hands raised.

One man, still holding a rifle, tried to justify himself:

"We just… wanted more, you know? More than the others."

Petronj, eyes dark, voice low and lethal:

"More than the others?"

The soldier hesitated. "Uh…"

Petronj took one long drag from his cigar, then exhaled slowly.

"Wrong. Fucking. Utopia."

Viktor, standing beside him, clutching his heart, whispering:

"I am so in love right now."

Masha, rolling her eyes but grinning:

"This was never a war. This was a house-cleaning."

Petronj, nodding, surveying the battlefield:

"And I say we never let the dust settle again."

The revolution had been tested.

And the revolution had crushed its enemies before breakfast.

Time: 04:12 AM
Location: Northern Frontlines, Temporary Command Center

The local turncoats had been rounded up, their stolen weapons confiscated, and their delusions of grandeur crushed beneath the cold, hard boot of reality.

But the other half of the so-called "enemy" forces?

They weren't locals.

Didn't look like locals.
Didn't speak the language.

Didn't even seem to know exactly what they were fighting for.

They had been outsourced.

Under normal circumstances, questioning mercenaries could be a long, complicated ordeal, requiring the careful art of psychological pressure, misinformation, and skilled interrogation tactics.

But these weren't normal circumstances.

And this wasn't a normal government.

So the questioning was conducted under the zealous scan of the OHCHR (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights), whose on-site monitors bore a suspicious resemblance to the wife's side of the family of the Minister of the Interior.

Coincidence?

Perhaps.

Did it affect the outcome?

Not in the slightest.

These foreigners weren't masterminds.

They weren't even real revolutionaries.

They were middle management—the buffer between the local traitors and whoever had actually organized this entire mess.

And who had organized this?

Whoever they were, they had been good.

No links appeared.

No traceable financial transactions.

No leaked communications.

Nothing.

It was as if the rebellion had materialized out of thin air.

The Supreme Commander Reacts

Petronj sat in the makeshift command tent, feet up on a rickety wooden table, flipping through the interrogation reports like he was reading the morning newspaper.

Viktor and Masha stood nearby, watching him, waiting for his response.

After a few moments, he exhaled a long plume of cigar smoke and muttered:

"No amateurs pull this off without leaving a trace."

Viktor: "So what does that mean?"

Petronj, leaning forward, tapping the report with the burnt end of his cigar:

"It means the real bastards are still out there. And they know how to cover their tracks."

Masha, arms crossed: "So what now?"

Petronj, standing up, grabbing his Winchester:

"We make them regret it."

Time: One Week Later
Location: Northern Region, Temporary Command Center (Formerly a Pile of Rubble)

For seven long days and nights, Supreme Commander Sander Petronj had refused to leave the front.

Despite sentimental pleas from:

Generals ("Sir, please, at least let us reinforce your tent with something thicker than canvas!")

Admirals ("Commander, at sea, we have warships for protection, you could be on one.")

Army commanders ("The enemy still might have snipers, sir!")

Air Force marshals ("There's a literal bunker, sir!")

A very persistent logistics officer ("We can airdrop a proper bed, sir! You don't have to sleep on an ammo crate!")

And that same couple of janitors, who had somehow remained involved in all this ("We could at least build a makeshift toilet, Supreme Commander.")

Petronj ignored them all.

For seven days, he slept under the stars, his Winchester propped against a sandbag, cigar smoke curling into the cold night air.

He ate with the soldiers, barked orders from the trenches, and refused to move until every last traitor, mercenary, and loose end had been secured or eliminated.

It wasn't until the eighth day that the impossible happened.

A hotel had been liberated.

Not just any hotel.

A very nice hotel.

Jacuzzis.
Saunas.
A cocktail bar.

Petronj was unmoved—at first.

Then, they said the magic words.
"There's a cocktail bar."

Petronj paused.

He squinted at the officer delivering the news.

He took a slow drag from his cigar.

Then, finally—

"Pack up, comrades. We're moving."

The entire command team exhaled in collective relief.

As their convoy rumbled toward the "liberated" five-star luxury, Viktor, slumped in his seat, turned to Masha.

"So we spent a week in a war zone because he refused to leave the field, but the moment someone mentions cocktails, he folds?"

Masha, grinning, pulling her beret lower over her eyes:

"A man has his priorities, Viktor."

Viktor, staring out the window at the passing rubble:

"I'm not even mad. I just… respect it."

Time: 06:38 AM
Location: Outside the Liberated Luxury Hotel

The morning was crisp, the air still carrying the scent of last night's expensive cigars and revolutionary victories.

Masha and Petronj stepped out of the hotel's grand entrance, ready to face another day of war, absurdity, and possibly cocktails before noon.

Then—instinct kicked in.

Petronj moved before the sound even registered.

One moment, they were walking.

The next—

His body slammed into Masha's, knocking her to the ground.

The hiss of an RPG launcher ignition filled the air.

A second later, an explosion ripped through the street.

Dust. Shrapnel. Flying debris.

He covered her completely, pressing her head down until the last piece of rubble had fallen.

Petronj lifted his head, eyes scanning for the enemy.

He exhaled slowly, calmly, as if someone had merely sneezed too loudly in his presence.

Then, flatly:

"Well, that was close."

He stood up, brushing some dust from his coat.

Then, turning to a nearby random officer:

"Find that capitalist. Napalm that hill bare."

The random officer hesitated.

"Sir, that is actually a very nice peach orchard…"

Petronj, lighting a cigar, unmoved:

"Napalm that actually very nice peach orchard to the ground. I want to smell peach cobbler from the bar."
Meanwhile, Masha sat up, dazed.

Her ears still rang from the blast.

Her uniform was covered in dust.

And yet—her entire focus was on the man who had shielded her with his own body.

She looked at his hand, still extended toward her, offering to help her up.

She took it, heart pounding, eyes wide.

Petronj, completely casual:

"You okay, comrade?"

Masha, blinking, nodding rapidly:

"Yes, sir, perfectly fine."

Petronj, pulling her up effortlessly:

"Come, I'll buy you a drink."

Masha, heart-shaped eyes, voice suddenly dreamy, teenage-crush level infatuation:

"He… protected me… He shielded me with his own body… He—he—"

Viktor, watching her physically melt, muttered under his breath:

"Oh great. Now she's in love."

Masha, barely hearing Viktor, still staring at Petronj in awe:

"It's already 6:38 in the morning… We can partake in hard liquor…"

Petronj, grinning as he led her back inside:

"Spoken like a true revolutionary."

As they walked toward the bar, a fireball erupted in the distance.

The smell of burning peaches began to drift through the air.

Time: 06:42 AM
Location: Luxury Hotel Bar, Northern Front

The smell of burning peaches still lingered in the morning air as Petronj, Masha, and Viktor strode into the bar—because where else do you go after surviving an RPG attack?

In the far corner booth, their favorite Italian anarchist relics, Enrico and Palmiro, were already deep into their version of breakfast.

A 54-liter demijohn of red wine sat between them, its tap dripping onto the table as they casually poured what could only be described as war rations of alcohol into their glasses.

Enrico, raising his glass:

"Ciao, ragazzi."

Palmiro, motioning to the demijohn:

"Venite a fare colazione?" (Come have breakfast?)

Viktor, grinning ear to ear:

"Ciao, nonni bellissimi!"

Petronj, collapsing into a chair, signaling the bartender with two fingers:

"Too early for me, compagni. I'll stick to Cuban rum."

Masha, grabbing Viktor by the arm, pulling him closer, whispering urgently while pointing at Petronj from behind:

(Mouthing) "Isn't he hoooooot?!"

Viktor, tilting his head, considering:

"Objectively, yes. Militarily? Terrifyingly so."

Masha, sipping her drink, eyes locked on Petronj with an unmistakable glow:

"I love a man who orders rum for breakfast after shielding me from explosives."

Petronj, unaware (or just completely unfazed) by the conversation happening behind him, lighting a cigar and swirling his rum, as if the world were already won.

The morning had barely begun, and the revolution was still unfolding—

But first, drinks.

Time: 06:47 AM
Location: Luxury Hotel Bar, Northern Front

The warm glow of early morning light filtered through the windows, casting a soft golden hue over the hotel bar—a surreal contrast to the fireball still burning on the distant hillside where a once-very-nice peach orchard had met its untimely end.

At the corner booth, Enrico and Palmiro subtly waved Viktor over with two wrinkled, battle-worn hands.

Viktor, mid-sip of his drink, paused.

Then, seeing their urgent yet casual gestures, he stood and approached.

As he arrived, they wordlessly pulled out a chair, then, as if executing a sacred ritual, produced a large, cured salame and freshly baked bread.

Enrico, placing the food before Viktor like an offering:

"Siediti." (Sit down.)

Palmiro, pouring him a dangerously full glass of deep red wine:

"Mangia un po' di pane e salame." (Eat some bread and salami.)

Enrico, leaning in, eyes twinkling with wisdom and amusement:

"Bevi un po' vino con noi." (Drink some wine with us.)

Palmiro, nodding sagely:

"Lasciali stare quei due. L'amore all'amore." (Leave those two alone. Let love be love.)
Meanwhile, At the Other Table…

Masha, leaning forward slightly, twisting a lock of her hair around her finger, voice suddenly softer, smoother:

"So… do you often dodge RPGs around here, soldier?"

Petronj, grinning as he swirled his Cuban rum:

"Only before breakfast."

Masha, laughing, eyes glinting:

"How very heroic of you."

Viktor, watching from the corner booth, mid-bite of his salami sandwich:

"Oh, this is happening."

Enrico, nodding, lifting his glass:

"Eh, era inevitabile." (It was inevitable.)

Palmiro, clinking his glass against Viktor's, sighing contentedly:

"E l'amore, ragazzo mio, è la rivoluzione più bella di tutte." (And love, my boy, is the most beautiful revolution of all.)

And with that, the old anarchists, the young revolutionary, and the morning sun bore witness to yet another legendary chapter in Petronj's story.

Time: 07:15 AM
Location: Luxury Hotel Bar, Northern Front

The fireball on the distant hill had finally settled, leaving nothing but scorched earth, smoldering

embers, and the faint, ghostly scent of caramelized peaches wafting in the air.

Back in the hotel bar, Petronj sat relaxed, enjoying his second—or was it third?—glass of Cuban rum, while Masha continued to dart heart-shaped eyes at him.

Then—the same random officer from before approached, standing stiffly at attention.

"Hill de-foliated, sir."

Petronj exhaled cigar smoke, nodding.

The officer cleared his throat, looking slightly pained:

"Together with an orchard that bore the most sweet—" (a-hem, focus, soldier, focus) "No more potential snipering from there, sir."

A pause.

Then, cautiously:

"How was your cobbler, sir?"

Petronj narrowed his eyes, taking a slow drag from his cigar.

Then, voice gravelly, low, dangerous:

"I like it crispier."

The officer, without hesitation:

"I'll get more napalm, sir."

And just like that, he saluted, turned on his heel, and marched off, likely toward the nearest armory.

Petronj reached for his rum, ready to enjoy the rest of his morning in peace, when—

Masha, gently touching his arm, voice soft, filled with dangerous levels of admiration:

"The orders you give are so big and strong…"

Petronj froze mid-sip.

Slowly, he turned to look at her.

She was staring at him, completely enraptured.

Petronj, studying her carefully, narrowing his eyes slightly:

"…Are you shell-shocked?"

Masha, blinking rapidly, snapping out of it for a brief moment:

"Huh?"

Petronj, genuinely concerned:

"Did the explosion mess with your head?"

Masha, blushing, suddenly defensive:

"What? No! I'm fine!"

Petronj, still eyeing her with suspicion, like she might start babbling nonsense at any moment:

"You sure? You're… looking at me differently."

Masha, leaning closer, smirking:

"Oh, I assure you, I am perfectly fine, Commander."

Petronj, taking another sip of rum, silently deciding that this was something he was going to have to monitor.

Viktor, drinking his wine, shaking his head:

"This whole revolution just took a very unexpected turn."

Palmiro, toasting his glass toward Viktor, chuckling:

"E l'amore, ragazzo mio… sempre inevitabile." (And love, my boy… always inevitable.)

Time: 07:32 AM
Location: Luxury Hotel Bar, Northern Front

Petronj was midway through his rum, enjoying the morning despite the lingering scent of napalmed peaches, when the same random officer approached yet again.

"Sir, we have captured three more shooters before they could act. They are currently being interrogated."

Petronj, without looking up, swirling his drink: "Efficient work."

The officer, nodding sharply: "The minister's wife's family is already on site."

Petronj, exhaling slowly, mildly amused: "Of course they are."

"Where did you find them?"

The officer cleared his throat, clearly mentally bracing himself.

"Totally far from the Cherry Orchard behind the hotel, which bears the sweetest—"

He hesitated.

Then, voice full of suffering:

"Even Chekhov would change the fourth act of—"

Petronj, raising a hand, cutting him off:

"I get it, I get it."
The Procession of Pleaders

The officer shifted uncomfortably, then pulled a clipboard from under his arm.

"Sir, there is also a list of visits for you."

Petronj, raising an eyebrow: "Visits?"

Before the officer could clarify, a crowd began forming outside the hotel bar.

A full-blown procession of pleaders.

Politicians, hands wringing, faces pale.
High-ranking officers, visibly sweating.
The same two janitors who had somehow become part of military operations.

All of them gathered, all of them pleading, all of them repeating the same request in different ways:

"Commander, please, at least return to HQ."
"Sir, a helmet! Just a helmet!"
"Supreme Leader, we beg you—"
"Sir, we'll reinforce the hotel with anti-aircraft guns if that's what it takes, just stop walking into open spaces!"

Petronj sighed deeply, taking the last sip of his rum, setting the glass down gently.

Then, standing up, he surveyed the desperate faces before him.

He took one slow drag from his cigar, exhaled, and—

Ignored them all.

"Back to work, comrades."

He strode past them, Masha following like a shadow, Viktor sighing in the background, and the entire procession groaning in collective despair.

The Supreme Commander was staying on the front.

And there wasn't a damn thing anyone could do about it.

Time: 07:45 AM
Location: Luxury Hotel → Frontline Command Post

Petronj strode past the procession of pleaders, completely unmoved by their desperation, Masha at his side, Viktor dragging his feet like a man resigned to his fate.

The assembled politicians, generals, officers, and janitors all watched in stunned horror, their last hope of getting the Supreme Commander into a bunker crushed before their eyes.

But then—a new sound.

The soft, rhythmic squeaking of a wheelbarrow.

All heads turned.

And there they were.

Enrico and Palmiro, following Petronj like two ancient apostles, rolling a battered wheelbarrow down the grand hotel steps.

Inside the wheelbarrow:

A 54-liter demijohn of red wine, wobbling precariously.
Fresh pane e salame, stacked neatly.
A crate of C4 explosives. (Just in case.)

Enrico, adjusting his cap, nodding to the gathered crowd:

"Ci vediamo, ragazzi." (See you later, boys.)

Palmiro, tightening the straps securing the explosives:

"Il Comandante ha parlato." (The Commander has spoken.)

The crowd just stared—unsure whether to intervene or salute.

Petronj, glancing over his shoulder at the wheelbarrow, nodding approvingly:

"I like their preparation."

Masha, smirking:

"I like you."

Viktor, rubbing his temples, muttering to himself:

"We are a globally recognized military power… and this is how we operate."

And with that, the most terrifying, absurd, and unstoppable unit of revolutionaries the world had ever seen disappeared into the horizon.

Time: 08:20 AM
Location: High Meadow Plateau

The meadow stretched wide, the golden waves of tall grass swaying with the wind, an ocean of motion beneath the vast sky.

Standing at the edge of the ridge, gazing out at the breathtaking expanse below, stood Commander Sander Petronj.

One leg propped on a rock.
Winchester slung effortlessly on his hip.
Something between John Wayne and Hemingway… but sexier.

(At least, according to what Masha wrote in her diary—drawing hearts all over the page.)

A random officer (no relation to the previous random officer, despite a slight resemblance) hesitantly approached.

"Sir, why are we camping here on the plateau? There's never been any recorded activity here."

Petronj, without looking away from the view:

"Game's great."

Before the officer could process this, Petronj raised his Winchester, took aim without hesitation, and—

CRACK.

A single shot rang out.

A buck, running full speed through the meadow, collapsed instantly—bullet clean through its skull.

The Italians Approve

Enrico, grinning, raising his glass of morning wine:

"Bel colpo!" (Nice shot!)

Palmiro, rubbing his hands together:

"Che brasato stasera!" (What a braised venison we'll have tonight!)

Officer n.2, visibly unsettled:

"Sir, hunters generally avoid headshots to preserve the trophy."

Petronj, finally turning to face him, unimpressed:

"Trophy hunting is for decadent capitalists overcompensating for a tiny weeny."

Masha, quietly mouthing "oh my god" while writing furiously in her diary.

Petronj, lighting his cigar, exhaling slowly:

"We hunt for food."

Officer n.2, blinking, clearly unsure how to respond:

"You seem to enjoy keeping us well-fed, sir."

Petronj, shrugging:

"Didn't Picasso enjoy painting?"

The officer paused, then nodded.

"Fair point."

Officer n.2, still recovering from his existential crisis, decided to press his luck.

"Also, hunters generally aim at the heart through the shoulder. It’s a much stabler target than a wobbling head."

Petronj, unbothered, reloading his Winchester in a fluid, practiced motion:

"Told you. Overcompensating amateurs."

CRACK.

A wild boar, charging through the underbrush fifty meters away, took a bullet through the eye and collapsed instantly.

Masha, clutching her rifle, whispering under her breath as she stared at Petronj in pure awe:

"He is down-compensating… oh myyy…"

Viktor, witnessing this hormonal meltdown in real time, groaned:

"For the love of the revolution, get a room."

Masha, still scribbling in her diary, now drawing even more hearts:

"Or a hunting lodge. Or a cabin in the woods. Or—
"

Viktor, hands over his ears:

"I regret everything."

Meanwhile, Petronj simply adjusted his hat, puffed his cigar, and went back to enjoying the view—perfectly unaware (or completely aware and just very amused) of the effect he was having

Time: 23:57 PM
Location: Plateau Camp, Under the Stars

The campfire crackled, sending sparks dancing into the vast night sky.

The air was crisp, carrying that cutting, clean scent of cold air and forming dew.

Around the fire, Enrico moved between men, ladling out Palmiro's perfectly braised venison, ensuring

each plate was accompanied by an industrial serving of wine. (Not optional.)

Petronj, however, sat apart from the group, perched on the edge of the camp, his Winchester resting beside him as he looked out into the endless dark.

His eyes were fixed on something unseen, something beyond the landscape, beyond the horizon—something only old soldiers see.

Masha, watching from the fire, saw her chance.

She stood, approached silently, stepping lightly over the grass until she was beside him.

Her voice was soft, playful, yet edged with something deeper:

"Smelling the night, old lion?"

Petronj exhaled through his cigar, not looking at her, but smiling slightly.

"Exactly that, comrade."

He took a deep breath, eyes still on the night.

"You know that cutting smell… of cold air and the dew forming on the grass…"

That was all it took.

Masha lost all hesitation.

She moved suddenly, throwing herself at him, arms wrapping around his broad back, pressing her lips hard against his, full of want, full of fire.

It was not shy.

It was not hesitant.

It was hunger, passion, a revolution of its own.

For a brief, suspended moment, Petronj let her.

Let the moment wash over him.

Let himself feel it.

Then—Masha hesitated.

She felt… no movement from him.

No rejection, no refusal— but no return either.

Her eyes widened, realization crashing over her.

She pulled back, stepping away almost guilty.

"I am sorry, Commander…"

Petronj, silent, still looking at the night, reached out without looking.

Took her hand in his.

Squeezed it gently.

Then, voice quiet, steady, full of something deep and unshaken:

"You make an old soldier very proud tonight, Sergeant."

Masha, heart pounding, unsure if she should be devastated or honored.

Petronj, finally turning to look at her, a small, wry smile on his lips:

"As if he could still lighten the heart of attractive NCOs that rookies can only dream about."

Masha, blinking fast, searching his face.

Petronj, voice lower, slower now, measured:

"But a man's gotta live with himself, Sergeant."

His eyes flicked down to his gun holsters— worn, cracked, darkened with age and use.

"And even the leather of my guns' holsters is older than you are."

She exhaled sharply.

Not angry.

Not disappointed.

But… understanding.

And somewhere, deep inside, still glowing with quiet pride.

She squeezed his hand back, once, and stepped away.

Petronj, turning back to the night, took another slow drag of his cigar.

And the old lion sat under the stars, as a soldier, as a leader··· and as a man who knew exactly who he was.

Time: 00:10 AM
Location: Plateau Camp, Under the Stars → Masha's Tent

Masha stood frozen for a moment, watching Petronj silhouetted against the vast, endless night—the cigar smoke curling around him, the Winchester resting against his leg, the firelight flickering against his face like something out of legend.

Her heart pounded.

Her breath was shallow.

Her mind screamed WHAT. A. LIVING. LEGEND.

Then—twelve seconds later.

Her body made a decision.

Her eyes scanned the camp.

Target acquired.

Viktor was mid-sip of a second (or maybe third) glass of industrial-grade Italian wine, seated comfortably by the fire, completely unaware of the hormonal hurricane heading his way.

Before he could process anything,

A firm hand gripped his collar behind his neck.

He was yanked backward.

His feet scrambled, legs dragging through the dirt as he was unceremoniously hauled toward a tent.

Viktor, blinking, disoriented: "Masha? What—?"

Masha, no words, just determined strides, laser focus.

They reached the tent.

Masha shoved him inside.

Viktor stumbled in, landing on his ass.

Inside the tent, Masha ripped open her own shirt, boots flying off, belt undone with military efficiency.

Viktor, wide-eyed, watching the tactical undressing like a soldier witnessing a battlefield he never trained for.

Masha, not slowing down, pointing at him aggressively:

"Take your clothes off. Real quick."

Viktor: "...."

Masha, panting, eyes dark with need:

"Shut up."

She jabbed a finger toward the entrance of the tent—toward where Petronj still stood, a god carved from revolution and war.

"You're going to fuck me like HE would."

Viktor, brain buffering.

Masha, voice sharp, firm, full of orders like she was leading a charge into enemy fire:

"And if you can't do it all in one round—"

She climbed on top of him, pressing him down, pupils fully dilated like a predator locking onto prey.

"—we'll have sessions."

Then—she pounced.

Like a lioness descending upon a defenseless gazelle.

Viktor, somewhere between terror and sheer, primal survival instincts, mentally saluted the revolution, then got to work.

Meanwhile, Outside…

Enrico and Palmiro, sitting by the fire, pouring themselves more wine, heard the distinct sounds of a tent zipper being yanked shut with violent enthusiasm.

They exchanged a glance.

Enrico, sipping his wine:

"Eh, meglio lui che il Comandante." (Better him than the Commander.)

Palmiro, nodding sagely, cutting more salami:

"La rivoluzione porta molte passioni." (The revolution brings many passions.)

Petronj, exhaling cigar smoke, still staring at the stars, completely unbothered.

The night continued.

And the revolution was alive and well.

Time: 06:17 AM
Location: Plateau Camp, Under the Rising Sun

The morning air was crisp, the first light creeping over the hills, the scent of burning embers and strong Italian wine still lingering in the air.

From inside a tent, a zipper screeched open.

First out: Viktor.

No shirt.
Wearing only his uniform tie (for some reason).
Hair disheveled.
Eyes hollow, staring into the middle distance like a man who had survived a night of war. (A different kind of war.)

Immediately after: Masha.

Wearing Viktor's shirt, fully unbuttoned.
One booted foot, one bare.
Hair an absolute wreck.
Grinning like she had won the war.

The two of them stepped out into the camp—only to immediately realize that the entire camp was already in full commotion.

Across the clearing, a six-man squad was being marched toward the center of camp.

Black ops uniforms.

Top-tier gear.

High-tech equipment.

Bodies built for combat.

Tactical vests, suppressed rifles, every inch of them screaming professional special forces.

But the real horror?

They were being herded like cattle by two old Italian men—

Palmiro, leading the march with a Beretta™ shotgun slung over his shoulder like a shepherd guiding unruly sheep.

Enrico, walking at the rear, keeping them in line with not one, but TWO Beretta™ 9mm pistols, aimed at center mass like a goddamn John Woo movie.

And these weren't amateurs.

These were not militia.

These were highly trained operatives, professionals—the kind of men who would normally infiltrate, assassinate, and disappear without a trace.

And yet—

They had been captured.

By two ancient communists.

With hunting weapons.

Petronj, standing at the edge of the campfire, sipping his morning rum, raising an eyebrow as the scene unfolded.

Viktor, blinking rapidly, trying to process reality.

Masha, shaking off her night-induced haze, straightening up.

Then—Enrico, grinning, spinning one of his pistols lazily before reholstering it.

"Andavamo per funghi… e abbiamo trovato questi."

(We were looking for mushrooms… and we found these guys.)

Silence.

The entire camp stood still.

Viktor, dead inside, rubbing his face:

"I—What—I don't—"

Masha, squinting at the black-ops soldiers, tilting her head:

"Were they… also looking for mushrooms?"

Palmiro, grunting, shaking his head:

"No gli abbiam trovato funghi addosso." (No mushrooms on them.)

Enrico, shrugging as if this was the most normal thing in the world:

"Magari cercavano noi." (Maybe they were looking for us.)

Petronj took a long sip of rum.

Then, without missing a beat:

"Well, let's find out if they know how to make peach cobbler."

The captured special forces all visibly tensed.

Enrico grinned.

Palmiro racked his shotgun.

The morning was just getting started.

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"BERETTA: FROM 1526 TO THE PRESENT"

The oldest industrial dynasty in the world: fifteen generations of captains who have fostered innovation and created a business model ahead of its time.

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(Also, Enrico and Palmiro swear by it. And, considering they just took down a squad of professional black-ops operatives with Beretta™ weapons while foraging for mushrooms, we'd say that speaks for itself.)

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"We tried it. We recommend it."

Cured to perfection.
Pairs well with revolution.
Best served with industrial portions of wine and possibly a side of C4.

Salame Beretta™—Because Even The Most Hardened Revolutionaries Need Good Snacks.

And now, back to the show.

Time: 06:30 AM
Location: Plateau Camp, Under the Rising Sun

The captured black ops operatives stood in restrained silence, watching as Commander Petronj, the living legend, strolled toward a makeshift seating area of rocks and logs, as if he had all the time in the world.

He sat down, casually, Winchester resting against his knee, cigar clenched between his teeth.

Then, in a tone that was neither threatening nor indulgent, but simply final:

"Disarm them. Bring them over. Bring the rum."

First, the Staff Is Summoned

Masha and Viktor snapped to attention.

Petronj, pointing at them:

To Masha: "Give him back his clothes."
To Viktor: "Son… wear anything at all, we have guests."

Viktor, still mildly concussed from the previous night, muttered:

"Yessir."

Masha, grinning to herself, already halfway out of her borrowed shirt:

"Right away, Commander."

The prisoners were seated in front of him.

A bottle of Cuban rum arched through the air, landing smoothly in the hands of one of the black ops soldiers.

Petronj, taking a swig from his own bottle:

"Help yourselves."

One of the black ops soldiers hesitated, then squared his shoulders:

"Name and rank, sir—"

Petronj, already tired of this:

"Oh, cut the crap. I'm not torturing you."

A pause.

Then, without missing a beat:

"Also—" He tilted his bottle at them.

"Different accents, mismatched gear… You don't have a rank. You're mercenaries."

A murmur passed between them.

One of them, eyes narrowed:

"Sir, how do you—"

Petronj, deadpan, taking another sip of rum:

"Not my first rodeo, dumbo."

A long silence.

Then, flatly:

"Now, drink."

The black ops men exchanged looks.

Then—one of them popped the bottle, took a sip.

The others followed.

Masha and Viktor stepped back into the scene—

> Viktor, now fully dressed (thank Lenin).
> Masha, looking very pleased with herself.

One of the black ops soldiers, still processing the absolute absurdity of the situation, muttered to his comrade:

"These two, sir…"

Petronj, nodding, taking another sip of rum:

"All night long."

Black op, visibly shaken:

"Sir, we were two miles uphill, sir. And still—"

Petronj, turning to Viktor, smirking slightly:

"Good for you, kid."

The black ops soldiers paused.

Then—as one—they stood.

Turned towards Viktor

Backs straight.

Eyes sharp.

And saluted.

Petronj, raising his bottle, completely unbothered.

The black ops men drank.

The revolution continued.

Time: 07:05 AM
Location: Plateau Camp, Under the Rising Sun

The rum had flowed.

The fire burned low.

The tension had eased, turning the campfire interrogation into something else—something almost like a bar conversation, except the drinks were poured from military rations, and the bar stools were logs and ammunition crates.

Petronj, leaning back against a rock, cigar smoldering between his fingers, exhaled slowly.

Then, to the black ops soldiers:

"I hold no grudge against you guys."

They looked at him, listening.

"You live in a materialistic bubble. You need money. They pay you. I get it."

One of the mercenaries nodded, swirling the rum in his tin cup.

"Nor us any grudge to you guys. As you said—"

He shrugged.

"They just pay."

A pause.

Petronj, smirking slightly:

"So pointless to ask who's paying you, eh?"

The mercenary grinned back.

"Just numbers falling on an offshore account."

Petronj, exhaling through his nose, flicking ash from his cigar:

"Yeah, figured."

A beat.

Then, curious, casual:

"Tell me—what are the rates to have me killed these days?"

The mercenaries paused.

Exchanged glances.

A few of them muttered among themselves.

Then—one of them scribbled a number onto a scrap of paper and handed it over.

Petronj took it, unfolded it, and raised an eyebrow.

Masha, leaning over, trying to peek:

"What's it say?"

Petronj, amused, showing her the number.

Masha, glaring at the mercenaries:

"That's insultingly low."

Viktor, leaning in, doing quick mental math:

"That's about the price of a··· mid-range yacht."

Masha, outraged:

"A mid-range yacht?! That's it?! For him?! Are you people out of your minds?!"

The mercenaries just shrugged.

One of them, calmly taking another sip of rum:

"Market's competitive."

Petronj, chuckling, tossing the paper into the fire:

"I guess I should be flattered I'm still worth anything at all."

Masha, muttering, crossing her arms:

"I wouldn't kill you for anything less than an aircraft carrier."

Petronj, grinning:

"That's why I keep you around, Sergeant."

The mercenaries laughed.

The campfire burned on.

And the game of war continued.

Time: 07:35 AM
Location: Plateau Camp, Under the Rising Sun

The mercenaries had settled in, rum in their cups, a temporary ceasefire established over mutual professional respect and alcohol.

But, mercenaries being mercenaries, one of them couldn't resist a jab.

"So how many collectively-owned acres of motherland do you grant your spec ops to fight for you?"

A few of them chuckled, thinking they had landed a solid hit.

Petronj, completely unfazed, calmly reached into his pocket, tore a scrap of paper, and scribbled something on the back.

Without a word, he passed it back to them.

The mercenary took it.

Read the number.

Then—his entire posture shifted.

He straightened in his seat.

Cleared his throat.

Handed it to the next guy.

Same reaction.

And the next.

Until the entire group of black ops sat in stunned silence, gripping their cups a little tighter.

"Well… sir, that is…"

Petronj, grinning slightly, puffing his cigar:

"That's how I keep the best, suckers."

He gestured lazily toward Enrico and Palmiro, who were still sitting by the fire, seemingly unbothered.

"The others like you? I have hunted down by Italian communists who defeated Mussolini."

Palmiro, still tending to the fire, not even looking up:

"I was flushing out fascists before your nonna was born, giovanotto."

One of the black ops soldiers shivered.

Another one, low voice, urgent whisper:

"Sir, those two give me the creeps."

Petronj, exhaling smoke, nodding:

"Yeah. Me too."

He grinned.

"That's why I keep them close."

The mercenaries gulped their rum.

And for the first time that morning, they felt very, very outgunned.

Time: 07:50 AM
Location: Plateau Camp, Under the Rising Sun

The fire was dying down.

The bottles were mostly empty.

The mercenaries, once captives, were now just men who had drunk, laughed, and survived the night.

Petronj, leaning back, stretching his shoulders, flicking the last bit of ash from his cigar, exhaled slowly:

"Okay, guys. I have no use for you."

The black ops soldiers sat up straighter.

Some looked relieved, some surprised, but none questioned it.

"Walk your way back. Never cross my path again."

He took one last swig of rum, then grinned.

"Keep the rum."

The mercenaries stood, stretching, adjusting their gear—what little they still had.

One of them nodded:

"Well, thank you, sir. Nice meeting you."

The others murmured in agreement, throwing awkward, appreciative nods toward Masha,

They turned, took their first steps toward freedom.

Then—Petronj spoke.

"Oh, guys… leave your boots here."

The mercenaries froze.

A chill passed through them.

One of them gulped.

Another, hesitant:

"Sir?"

Petronj, deadpan, flicking his cigar to the ground, grinding it under his heel:

"The revolution is not a dinner party."

Silence.

The mercenaries exchanged uneasy glances.

Then, one by one, they unlaced their boots, set them down, and walked barefoot into the morning light.

Enrico, watching them leave, muttering to Palmiro:

"Camminano come i soldati di Napoleone in Russia." (They walk like Napoleon's soldiers in Russia.)

Palmiro, nodding sagely, refilling his wine:

"Meglio scalzi che morti." (Better barefoot than dead.)
Masha's Verdict

Masha, watching the mercenaries disappear into the horizon, turned to Viktor.

"He even outmaneuvers them on the way out. God, I love him."

Viktor, dead inside:

"Masha. Please."

Petronj, already lighting another cigar, unbothered:

"Alright, comrades. Let's find more game. Breakfast's on me."

And with that, the campfire morning came to an end, leaving behind only rum bottles, boot prints, and another chapter of legend.

Time: 08:15 AM
Location: Plateau Meadow Camp

The sun was rising higher, casting long golden light over the meadow, the air crisp and fresh, carrying the lingering scent of burnt wood, gunpowder, and revolution.

Petronj, cigar clenched in his teeth, Winchester in hand, strolled into the open meadow.

The morning wasn't complete without target practice.

A distant rock formation? Too easy.
A moving hawk circling above? Tempting.
A blade of grass moving the wrong way? Might as well.

The rifle cracked through the morning silence, sending birds scattering into the sky.

Meanwhile, at Masha's Tent…

Masha, not letting the opportunity pass, grabbed Viktor by the collar and pushed him back into the tent.

Viktor, still buttoning up his uniform from earlier:

"Wait—Masha, we just—"

Masha, already unbuckling his belt:

"Shut up. Another round. Now."

Viktor, caught between exhaustion and fate, saluted mentally and let himself be consumed.

A group of regular soldiers, loitering near the fire, sipping their morning coffee, watched the sequence of events unfold.

Petronj walking off to shoot things.

Masha dragging Viktor back into the tent with intent.

One of them, staring into his tin cup:

"Sooo… how about those funghi?"

A beat.

Then—all eyes turned to the Italians.

Enrico and Palmiro, who had been casually enjoying their morning wine, suddenly blinked in realization.

"Oh, right…"

"The funghi."

They stood up, stretched, picked up their baskets, and sauntered off into the woods like two old men heading to a Sunday market—except armed to the teeth.

A commander shooting things for sport.

A sergeant having an entirely different kind of shooting session.

Two elderly communists going mushroom hunting, fully armed.

And a bunch of regular soldiers just trying to enjoy their coffee.

Just an old-fashioned revolutionary camping trip.

Time: 10:15 AM
Location: Mountain Creek, Downstream from the Plateau Meadow

The icy water of the mountain creek sparkled under the sunlight, rushing downstream in crisp, clear currents.

Masha and Viktor, both half-submerged, were splashing water at each other, laughing, cooling down from their very rigorous morning exercise.

Then—something caught their attention downstream.

A figure.

A man.

Naked.

Sitting waist-deep in the water, bottle of rum in one hand, cigar in the other, completely at ease with himself and the world.

His combat gear, weapons, and uniform were neatly stacked on a rock nearby, as if even war itself had to take a break for a drink.

Petronj.

He looked up, saw them staring, and grinned.

"Oh, come on, guys. Get here. We're all naked, let's enjoy the creek."

Masha, wading closer, squinting slightly:

"So, sir, what's our next move?"

Petronj, puffing his cigar, looking completely unconcerned:

"Move to what?"

Masha, now more serious:

"Sir… stop the invasion? Or coup? Or… whatever this is?"

Petronj, finally turning to face her, exhaling a slow stream of smoke, eyes sharp but amused:

"Oh, comrade… don't you get it?"

Masha and Viktor, now fully focused, moved closer.

"There's no invasion. No coup."

He took a slow drag of his cigar, exhaling smoke into the morning air.

"There never is."

Masha and Viktor exchanged a glance.

Petronj, gesturing lazily with his rum bottle:

"They just introduce some disturbance around. And let it work."

Viktor, furrowing his brow:

"Disturbance?"

Petronj, nodding, swirling the rum in the bottle:

"Throw sand in the gears. Socialism is an oiled machine—throw sand in, and it breaks."

Masha, arms crossed, thinking it through:

"They don't need to stage an actual coup, do they?"

Petronj, grinning, amused that she was catching on:

"Nope. Just fuck things up a little. Watch it snowball. Let people lose faith."

He leaned forward slightly, voice dropping just a fraction:

"They live in bubbles. Throw some sand in, a few bubbles collapse… new bubbles form around."

He sighed, rubbing his temple with his free hand, his voice edged with something between exhaustion and absolute certainty.

"I've been in revolutions. All of them."

He looked at them both, sharp, unwavering.

"It's always the same."

Viktor, processing, shaking his head:

"So… we're not fighting an enemy. We're fighting… entropy?"

Petronj, chuckling, sipping his rum:

"We're fighting reality, kid. That's the real war."

Masha, staring at him, suddenly aware of how deep this man had seen into the world.

How many wars.

How many revolutions.

How many times he had watched history repeat itself—again and again and again.

She shivered.

And this time, it wasn't from the cold water.

Petronj, stretching lazily, taking another sip of rum:

"Why did you think I've been camping here so long?"

Masha and Viktor exchanged a glance.

Petronj, grinning, gesturing at the scenery:

"I wanted to enjoy the mountains a bit."

Masha, rolling her eyes but smirking:

"So… what do we do?"

Petronj, tilting his head, flicking cigar ash into the water:

"You kids?"

His voice hardened, the casual grin fading into something stronger, something that carried the weight of every revolution he had ever fought.

"You fight them back. You stop them in their tracks. You don't allow them to pass."

Then, voice rising, louder, sharper, as if summoning ghosts of the past:

"¡NO PASARÁN!"

Viktor felt his entire spine straighten.

Masha, breath catching, fists clenching, heart pounding.

Petronj, grinning again, more relaxed now, turning to Viktor, gesturing at Masha:

"I mean, look at you, kids. Comrade Viktor, agree with me here…"

He gestured vaguely at Masha, smirking.

"She holds a couple of very firm faiths in the socialist cause."

Masha, blinking, then realizing.

"Commander, are you talking about—"

Petronj, already turning to Masha, pointing at Viktor:

"And you, Sergeant Masha…"

His grin widened.

"You can count on some impressive artillery for your barrage."

Viktor, choking on absolutely nothing:

"SIR—"

Masha, turning red but standing taller, crossing her arms, smirking at Viktor:

"He’s not wrong, comrade."

Viktor, mild existential crisis.

At that moment, from upstream, two figures emerged from the woods, carrying heavy towels and baskets.

Enrico and Palmiro.

They marched up to the edge of the creek like two old shepherds gathering their lost lambs.

"Bambini!" Enrico called, holding out a massive towel.

"Come here, dry yourselves!"

Palmiro, grinning, setting down a basket:

"Come, we are making polenta coi funghi!"

Masha, exchanging one last look with Petronj, before climbing out of the creek, wrapping a towel around herself.

Viktor, still reeling, still processing everything, slowly followed.

Petronj, stretching his arms, sighing contentedly, making no move to leave the water.

"I'll stay a bit longer here."

He took another slow sip of rum, puffed his cigar, letting the smoke curl into the morning air.

"Drinking and smoking in the stream."

The young revolutionaries left the creek, heading back toward hot polenta, fresh mushrooms, and whatever fight awaited them.

Meanwhile, the old lion remained, soaking in the mountain creek, where the war couldn't quite touch him.

EPILOGUE

There is no epilogue.

You've seen how these things go.

Read a couple of history books.
Some newspapers.
Maybe just not the most commercial ones.

Just… next time you eat some funghi, think about this:

At some point in history, people like Palmiro Togliatti, Enrico Berlinguer, Sander Petronj—

We mean, of course, Sandro Pertini.

They fought.

They fought for freedom AND for social justice.

Because freedom and social justice are an inseparable binomial.

Because freedom without social justice

…means being free to starve.

A-1-11

TELEGRAFI DELLO STATO

(MODELLO 33)

Art. 96 del Regolamento 4 Marzo 1866.

Ufficio di

N.

Ufficio di destinazione	Parole tassate N.	Spedito il 186
	delle quali in linguaggio ordinario N.	ore
Numero	Presentato il 186 ore	all'Ufficio di
Qualità del dispaccio	Via	L'Ufficiale trasmittente
	Indicazioni eventuali	

In queste tabelle nulla è a segnarsi da chi redige il dispaccio.

(Destinatario) Comando Supremo Padova

(Indirizzo) Ho ricevuto il Dispaccio N° 1073

(Testo) Obbedisco. G. Garibaldi

The revolution won. The proletariat rules. So why is Supreme Commander Sander Petronj still drinking, shooting his own ceiling, and ordering airstrikes on fruit trees? Because peace is a scam, capitalism cheats, and mercenaries keep showing up.

With a lovestruck sergeant, a reluctant revolutionary, and two elderly Italian communists armed to the teeth, Petronj prepares for the real war—the one fought with whispers, sabotage, and just enough chaos to break the system.

With a cigar in his teeth and rum in his hand, he picks up the phone, gives the order, and grins:
"Play ball."